

Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources

2002-2003

ANNUAL REPORT

Honorable Bob Riley
Governor of Alabama
State Capitol
Montgomery, AL 36130



Dear Governor Riley:

I am pleased to submit the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2002-2003. The Department made significant strides in many areas last year.

Recreational license sales total more than \$15 million annually. For the first time, hunting and fishing licenses were made available online and through an electronic system at some county probate offices and at all Wal-Mart stores throughout the state. This new system makes obtaining a license much easier for our customers.

Nine tracts of land were purchased during the fiscal year by the Forever Wild Land Trust. These tracts brought total land acquisitions under the Forever Wild program to 32 tracts containing a total of 89,666 acres.

2003 saw continuing renovations at Alabama's State Parks. Bald Rock Lodge at Cheaha State Park was re-opened in June after complete renovations. The new visitor's center at Cathedral Caverns was also completed in 2003.

We are partnering with the Department of Education to conduct a pilot program called Archery in the Schools. Unlike many school activities, students of all sizes and abilities can easily be involved in archery. Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries personnel are coordinating this statewide effort, one of many programs we sponsor to increase recreational activities among Alabama's youth.

I am extremely proud of the Department's accomplishments and I appreciate your support and leadership to the State of Alabama.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Barnett Lawley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

M. Barnett Lawley
Commissioner

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Department Overview

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is an executive and administrative department of the State of Alabama created by statute. The Commissioner, appointed by the Governor as a member of his cabinet, advises the Governor and Legislature on management of freshwater fish, wildlife, marine resources, waterway safety, state lands, state parks, and other natural resources.

Scope of Operations

The Department's scope of operations includes the administration, management and maintenance of 24 state parks, 23 public fishing lakes, three freshwater fish hatcheries, 34 wildlife management areas, two waterfowl refuges, two wildlife sanctuaries, a mariculture center with 35 ponds, and 645,000 acres of trust lands managed for the benefit of several state agencies, the General Fund and Alabama Trust Fund. Other departmental functions include maintenance of a State Land Resource Information Center and administration of the Forever Wild land acquisition program.

Organization

During Fiscal Year 2003, the Department had five operational divisions and seven support sections. The operational divisions were Marine Police, Marine Resources, State Lands, State Parks and Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries. Support sections were Accounting, Diversity and Recruiting, Engineering, Information and Education, Information Technology, Legal, and Personnel and Payroll. The Commissioner is advised by a 10-member Conservation Advisory Board appointed by the Governor.

Division directors managed the Department's programs under their jurisdiction through authority delegated by the Legislature and the Commissioner. Concerted efforts were made to balance needs and requirements against resources and available funding to satisfy present and future public and resource requirements. Active public education and voluntary participation programs were expanded and new plans were implemented to achieve maximum multiple-use benefits consistent with resource conservation.

Department Goals

The Department's major goal is to promote the statewide stewardship and enjoyment of Alabama's natural resources, and to ensure that future generations will be able to enjoy these resources.

Funding

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources receives no general fund support. Funding for the Department is generated through special revenues, which include federal money, cigarette taxes, user and license fees, mandated interest from endowment and federal regulations. The Forever Wild Program received interest income from the Alabama Trust Fund. Specific revenue sources for the five operational divisions are as follows:

Marine Police: Boat registration fees, fines, marine gas tax and federal grants.

Marine Resources: Saltwater fishing licenses, fines, marine gas tax and federal grants. Marine Resources also has an endowment but it has not grown enough as of date to enhance operations.

State Lands: Management fees from the sale of timber, minerals and various leases on state lands administered under the Land Based Asset Management Program. Further, the division receives additional federal grants which support specific programs.

State Parks: User-generated funds in the form of entrance, rental, lodging, golf and other recreational fees. State Parks received a modest amount of funding from cigarette tax revenue.

Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries: Fishing and hunting licenses and permits; fines; waterfowl stamps; federal allocations from excise taxes on sporting arms, ammunition, archery gear and some fishing tackle; and federal grants. Interest income, although at slightly declining interest rates, continues to be generated by the Game and Fish endowment fund for resident lifetime hunting and fishing licenses. Direct donations and voluntary state income tax refund check-offs for the Nongame Wildlife Program continue to decrease from previous fiscal years.

Conservation Advisory Board

The Conservation Advisory Board, created by statute, is composed of 10 members appointed by the Governor for alternating terms of six years, and three ex-officio members in the persons of the Governor, the Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries, and the Director of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. The Commissioner of Conservation and Natural Resources serves as the ex-officio secretary of the board.

The Advisory Board assists in formulating policies for the Department of Conservation, examines all rules and regulations and makes recommendations for their change

or amendment. By a two-thirds vote of the members present and with the Governor's approval, the board can amend, make any changes, repeal or create and promulgate additional rules and regulations. The Board also assists in publicizing the Department's programs and activities.

Meetings

The Advisory Board met twice during FY 2003:

- March 8, 2003, at the State Capitol in Montgomery

Conservation Advisory Board Members as of September 30, 2003

Members	Home Town	Term Expires
Dan Moultrie, Chairman	Alabaster	March 28, 2009
Louis Coles	Enterprise	March 28, 2009
George Harbin	Gadsden	May 20, 2005
Bill Hatley	Clanton	May 20, 2005
Johnny Johnson	Tuscaloosa	March 28, 2009
W. Grant Lynch	Talladega	May 9, 2007
Wayne May	Eutaw	March 28, 2009
James W. Porter, II	Birmingham	May 9, 2007
Ross Self	Gulf Shores	March 28, 2009
Marvin Willis	Muscle Shoals	May 20, 2005

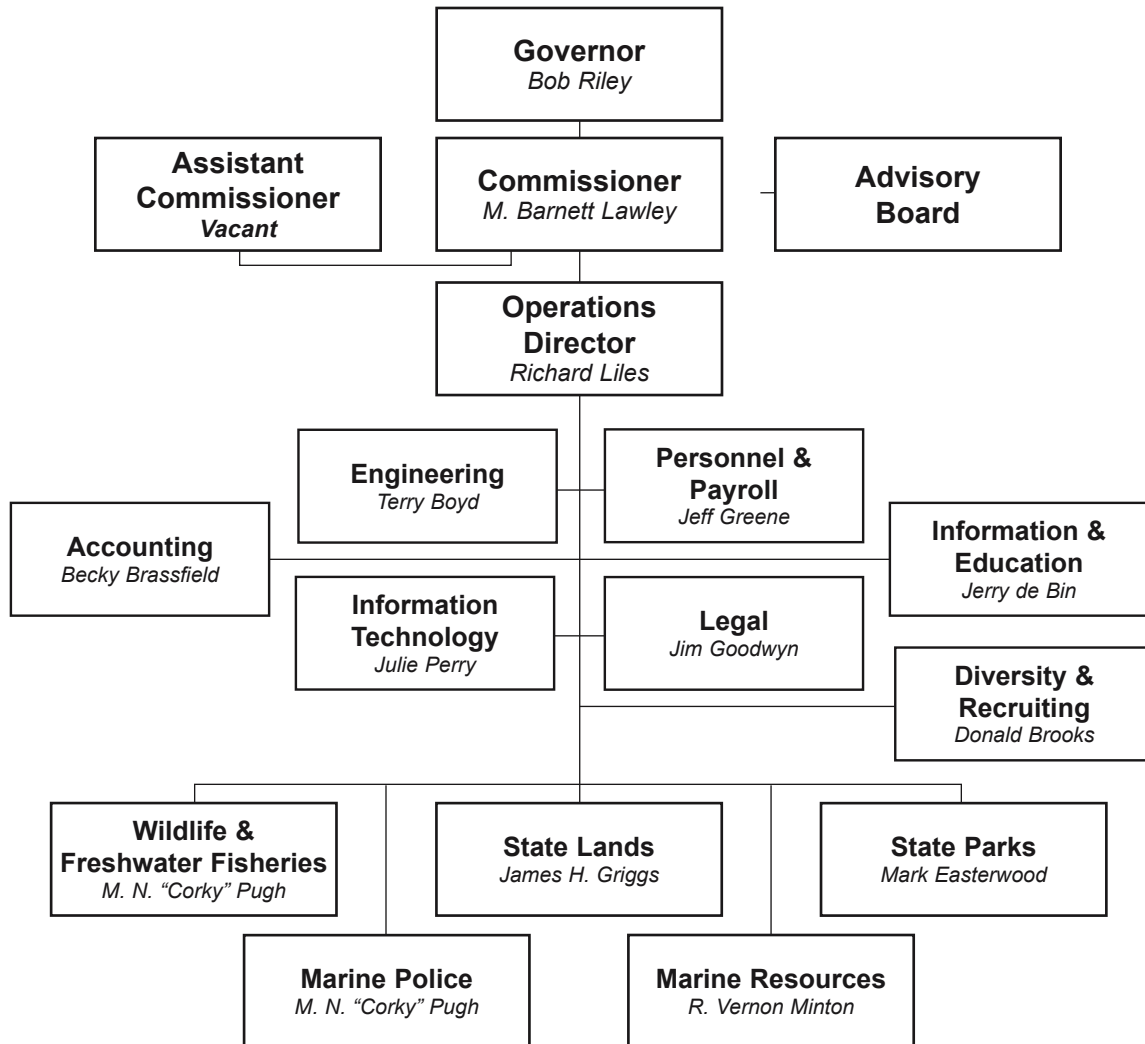
Ex-officio Members

Bob Riley, Governor
Gaines Smith, Auburn University Cooperative Extension System Interim Director
Ron Sparks, Department of Agriculture and Industries Commissioner

Ex-officio Secretary of the Board

M. Barnett Lawley, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Commissioner

Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources



2002-2003 Budgets and Expenditures for Administrative Division

Section	Budgeted Amounts	Actual Expenditures
Accounting	\$811,113.00	\$648,186.75
Auditing	\$147,987.00	\$91,428.98
Commissioner's Office	\$513,425.00	\$469,159.59
Diversity	\$197,657.00	\$124,871.79
Engineering	\$1,577,930.00	\$1,488,765.10
Information & Education	\$846,451.00	\$809,619.45
Information Technology	\$863,828.00	\$698,862.54
Legal	\$720,890.00	\$665,456.08
License	\$284,449.00	\$221,301.51
Personnel & Payroll	\$644,670.00	\$538,353.51
Warehouse	\$135,335.00	\$119,034.52
Totals	\$6,743,735.00	\$5,875,039.85

Administrative Division

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

The Commissioner is the executive officer of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and provides overall direction and guidance for carrying out the Governor's directives and implementing enacted legislation. The Commissioner establishes goals, policies and directions; approves programs and budgets; delegates authority; and provides support to administer the Department efficiently and effectively.

The Chief of Operations acts as liaison to the Alabama Legislature and other state agencies and serves as the Department's chief of staff. Two support personnel assist the Commissioner and Operations Chief.

The Commissioner's administrative staff includes seven sections that provide administrative support for the Commissioner and the Department's operational divisions. The administrative support sections are Accounting, Diversity and Recruiting, Engineering, Information and Education, Information Technology, Legal, and Personnel and Payroll. The operational divisions fund the Commissioner's office and administrative staff.

ACCOUNTING

The Accounting Section is the central clearinghouse for all departmental financial data. Accounting maintains and records all receipts and disbursements for the Commissioner's Office, staff sections and each of the five operating divisions. Accounting is responsible for five internal functions: General Accounting, Auditing, Budgeting, Administrative Procurement, and Agency Office Supplies/Central Mail.

General Accounting includes daily deposits of departmental funds, recording of all expenditures, preparation of monthly financial reports and statements, development of fiscal policies and procedures, reconciliation, coordination and preparation of the annual budget request.

Auditing is responsible for auditing all Conservation Department funds, including royalty and commission contracts. Additionally, the section performs fiscal audits of the individual state parks.

Procurement provides purchasing assistance to each administrative section.

Agency Office Supplies and Central Mail maintains a central supply room for daily office supply needs.

Accomplishments

On March 8, 2003, a \$12.5 million settlement with Mobil Oil Company (now Exxon Mobil) was reached regarding underpayments on leases originally entered into by Mobil. The settlement avoided pending litigation. Just after the

balance sheet date, a Montgomery jury awarded the state \$102 million in compensatory damages and \$11.4 billion in punitive damages in a retrial of a case with Exxon Mobil that had originally been tried three years earlier. The case will most likely be appealed back to the Alabama Supreme Court. The original verdict had been for \$87.7 million in compensatory damages and \$3.4 billion in punitive damages.

Recreational license revenues total over \$15 million annually. Internet and agent point-of-sale of licenses were offered this year. As a result of this action, there was a two- to four-week earlier collection of license revenue, which, in turn, produced more interest income for the operating divisions.

Future Plans

Currently there are several automated license systems and a manual system. It is anticipated that all license sales will be fully automated within the next two to three years.

Although the automated systems capture the demographic information of the state's recreational resource users, consolidation of the information and retrieval mechanisms must be devised. Without such action, the automated system will be unable to provide valuable statistics for management, contact resources to find out what user needs or concerns are, and feedback on current and ongoing projects.

DIVERSITY AND RECRUITING

The Diversity and Recruiting Section develops and implements programs designed to increase the pool of qualified applicants needed to hire and promote a work force that reflects the cultural and ethnic diversity of the state. This section maintains the department's Affirmative Employment Plan, does statewide recruiting, and contracts diversity training for the Department.

Future Plans

- Continue developing statewide recruiting using field employees as a recruiting resource.
- Develop partnerships with elementary, junior high, and high schools through our Adopt a School program; increase awareness in urban school districts of careers in conservation, and provide a link to outdoor recreational opportunities available in the state of Alabama.
- Enlarge our college internship program to include most four-year schools in Alabama where logistically

possible.

- Maintain our commitment to the Student Aide Program.
- Maintain our commitment to the Welfare to Work partnership with the Alabama Department of Human Resources.
- Continue the Natural Resources Law Enforcement Training program to include instructors from Alabama State University, Auburn University Montgomery, Alabama A&M University, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region IV, U.S. Treasury Department's ATF Division, and instructors from the Department of Conservation's five operating divisions.
- Provide diversity training for managers and employees on a quarterly basis.
- Increase community input into the Conservation diversity committee working group.
- Continue to work with the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and our Legal Section to get an approved Affirmative Employment Plan.

ENGINEERING

The Engineering Section provides professional planning and programming, engineering, architectural, landscape architectural, surveying and related administrative services to the various divisions of the department. These professional services best protect the state's natural resources by providing parks, recreational opportunities and services. The section's professional staff of engineers, architects, landscape architect and land surveyors ensure that solutions to conservation planning and programming, design and construction problems and the development of departmental projects are integrated with ecologically functional and aesthetic aspects within the confines of economic feasibility.

Facilities and Personnel

The Engineering Section had 23 employees during FY 2002-2003: one Chief of Engineering Services, one Architect II, one Professional Land Surveyor III, one Conservation Engineer I, one Landscape Architect, one Architect I, one Design Technician Supervisor, one Professional Land Surveyor I/II, one Clerk Stenographer III, one Conservation Construction Inspector I, three Land Survey Technicians, three Design Technicians, one Survey Assistant, one ASA II, three Utility Laborers and one retired state employee. The section's facilities are located in Montgomery.

Significant Accomplishments

Engineering Section programs consist of providing

the necessary professional expertise required to reach department goals. These programs include capital and improvement, using both out-sources and in-house design and in-house construction, master planning and site planning for department facilities. General technical assistance is also performed including construction document preparation, project status reports, annual reports, replies to correspondence, feasibility studies, advisement on proper repair and operation manuals, providing file information, technical field assistance, emergency project involvement, dam inspections, specification writing for material and equipment purchases, field maintenance and training assistance.

Engineering was also involved with coordination and assistance to department personnel in the area of computer software and hardware. Other areas include surveying assistance and technical advice on construction projects boundaries and property corners for State Parks, delineation and location of oyster reefs, public access areas, wildlife management areas, public lakes and other state managed property. Approximately 30 percent of Engineering Section time was spent on technical assistance of a general nature involving various Department activities requiring engineering input.

The Engineering Section prepared new and updated management area maps, updated and produced new park trail maps and completed numerous retirement certificates and appreciation awards. The section continued discussions between Department of Transportation and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources for the purpose of relaying digital information and continued the process of converting state maps, state park boundaries and wildlife management areas, new state park brochure/map and other related data to digital form.

The Engineering Section assisted the Commissioner's Office and the State Parks Division in the advertising for, and selection of private architectural/engineering firms to prepare documents for the State Parks Restoration Program. The section remains as a coordinating liaison between the Department of Conservation and these private firms to communicate the needs of the Department and to ensure their inclusion into the completed plans.

Administrative

General: Provided location maps; continued work on the Engineering Section's USGS quad maps; initiated updating the Engineering Section's filing (placing all information in the computer); provided assistance and support in the Parks renovation program; continued section's complete archival file scanning and production of digital format plan archives.

Marine Police

Logan Martin: Completed construction documents for District IV headquarters building and site and began construction phase of this work; completed Logan Martin-

Marine police boat ramp project.

Montgomery: Completed construction documents for new warehouse facility on Fairgrounds Road.

Orange Beach: Completed generator cover and new boat lift.

Baldwin County: Performed surveys.

Marine Resources

Dauphin Island: Produced additional Dauphin Island boat ramp survey and produced construction documents. Produced schematic design and renderings for public access area at Little Billy Goat Hole; completed construction of public access area and improvements; completed construction phase environmental and roadside enhancement for Dauphin Island Parkway in cooperation with the State Department of Transportation and Mobile County.

General: Produced sounding and survey work for properties and areas under Marine Resources control.

Claude Peteet Mariculture Center: Coordinated project and design for saltwater line. Completed construction documents for office expansion at Claude Peteet. Did preliminary schematics and elevations for fishing venue site and structures.

Baldwin County: Performed surveys.

Fort Morgan: Provided plans and contract documents for boat ramps, seawall and parking.

Mobile Bay: Fish enhancement reefs around existing oil rigs

Gulf/Mobile Bay: Inshore and offshore fishing reefs

State Lands

Spanish Fort: Completed construction of new Gatra Wehle Nature Center Complex at Blakeley State Park. Prepared preliminary schematics for Nature Center Landscape Design; completed construction documents, designs and specifications for the Cockleshell Boardwalk at Blakeley State Park.

Mobile-Tensaw Forever Wild Tract: Prepared construction documents, design and specifications for Recreational Canoe Trail Platforms.

Weeks Bay: Construction began for retaining wall, seawall and docks projects; construction proceeded for improvements to laboratory and research building at National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Forever Wild: Surveyed property in Jackson and Lauderdale counties.

General: Continued to work with consultant for master planning for Environmental Complex (Meaher North); performed property line surveys on school lands statewide. Located monuments on the Georgia, Florida, and Mississippi state lines; located mean high tide lines in Baldwin County; assisted in acreage determination and navigability research.

State Parks

Cathedral Caverns: Completed construction admin-

istration for entrance building, maintenance building and other site issues; Completed construction of new sanitary facilities and potable water for the upper park site. Completed design and site schematics for new shelters; coordinated with park crew for future construction. Continued work on new pedestrian facility.

Cheaha: Completed construction administration for water system-package plant upgrade/replacement/renovation project with consultant and general contractor; completed construction administration for Bald Rock Lodge, cabins and observation tower.

DeSoto: Continued to produce boundary line survey for segment of park.

Chewacla: Began construction phase of cabin renovations; prepared preliminary schematics for new office and entrance; began coordination of phase two of renovation work; prepared schematic and conceptual designs for a new campground area and associated structures for same.

Joe Wheeler: Administered work in continuing improvements; completed boundary and topographic surveys.

Lakepoint: Administered work with consultants preparing design documents for renovation of lodge, cabins, marina, and site improvements.

Meaher: Developed plans for restroom facility; continued to produce base mapping and master planning schematic; administered work with consultants preparing design documents for campground improvements; completed preliminary design work on new bathhouse.

Paul Grist: Performed boundary surveys

Oak Mountain: Provided master planning and construction observation for park improvement project at Peavine Falls Trail; administered work with consultants preparing design documents for master plan and improvements; Assisted with staging of Conservation Expo 2003; coordinated expansion of native wildflower areas at park road system.

Lake Guntersville: Provided survey and topographic information for park improvement projects; performed property line surveys; administered work with consultants preparing design documents for overall lodge and park improvements.

Gulf: Administered/worked with consultants preparing design documents for park improvements; participated in master planning and lodge/conference center improvements; worked with consultant in renovation of state fishing pier; provided survey and topographic information for park improvement projects; performed property line surveys; worked with consultants to complete plans and construction documents for dune enhancement habitat restoration, and facility improvements at Florida Point, Cotton Bayou, Romar Beach and County Road 2 sites.

Lake Lurleen: Continued to administer work with consultants preparing design documents for park improvements; performed property line surveys.

Wind Creek: Developed construction documents for

installation of new metal roofing system on bathhouse under construction by the State Parks construction crew; assisted Parks with new cabin work.

Monte Sano: Performed preliminary investigations and project scope for park improvement project; provided construction administration for renovations to the existing Tavern structure and continued campground improvements; performed property line surveys; did preliminary work and design for trailside shelter renovations.

General: Conducted research/plans for various other parks; performed preliminary investigations and project scope for various park improvement projects working with consultants; continued production/update of brochure maps for State Parks; produced and administered aerial mapping project of all state parks and provided assistance in consultant selection for ongoing Parks Renovation Program; provided assistance for Parks master planning program.

WILDLIFE AND FRESHWATER FISHERIES

State Lakes: Continued coordination of work done by fisheries at Lee County Lake; Washington County Lake drain tower design and contract administration; continued to performed property line surveys in Jackson County at the James D. Martin Management Area.

Hatcheries: Directed reconstruction of structures at Carbon Hill Fish Hatchery following tornado damage; did preliminary assessment and design for residences at the Marion State Fish Hatchery.

Fisheries: Choctaw County-Tuscaloosa Boat Ramp and Parking Lot: design and contract administration; Tuscaloosa Boat Ramp: Completed design and construction documents, began construction; Binion Creek Boat Ramp, Tuscaloosa County: Construction administration, lot resurfacing and striping plan; Shoal Creek Boat Ramp: Construction project administration; Marshall County-Minky Creek Boat Ramp: lot resurfacing design and contract administration; Claysville Boat Ramp parking lot: Administered paving contract; Water Front Parking Lot, Town Creek Parking Lot: Resurfacing, contract administration.

Law Enforcement: Provided digital files for hunter education and location maps; provided digital state WMA map for the Department of Transportation; performed property line surveys for numerous properties under the control of this division.

Wildlife: Continued GIS discussion and application work; updated/produced all state WMA maps; produced state-wide management area map inserts; aided in other various projects for this section including digitizing and acreage determination; continued surveyed property line at the James D. Martin/Skyline WMA; performed survey work.

Future Plans

The Engineering Section plans to continue surveying property lines for State Parks, Wildlife and Freshwater

Fisheries and other critical locations involving the department. The section also plans to provide master planning, programming, design and contract administration for future construction projects including the ongoing renovation program of the State Parks Division and other divisions, surveys of public access areas, maintenance of existing department facilities, and design and construction of new facilities when possible.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

The Information and Education Section provides information, education and outreach services for the Department. Informational services include print and electronic media such as *Outdoor Alabama* magazine for paid subscribers; news releases distributed to state and national media outlets; brochures; press kits; and special video productions.

Educational services include comprehensive K-12 conservation education curricula and teacher training programs; in-school conservation programs; and hands-on field trips for students. Last year 491 educators completed inservice workshops offered by the Department.

Outreach services include the Governor's One-Shot Turkey Hunt; STEP OUTSIDE, a mentor-based program to introduce newcomers to hunting, fishing and other nature-based recreation; and Becoming an Outdoors-Woman weekend seminars.

In addition, I&E provided public relations and publishing consultation as well as editorial, proofreading, and copy writing service for departmental staff; responded to information requests from the public, media and other agencies; drafted communiques for department administrators and the Governor's office; coordinated special projects; and acted as liaison to the Governor's Press Office.

Facilities and Personnel

I&E had 11 authorized and filled positions during FY 2003: a Biologist IV who served as section chief; a Public Information Manager who served as managing editor; a Public Information Specialist II and a Public Information Specialist I who served as staff writers; one Artist-Illustrator II who served as graphic artist; two Conservation Education Specialists who coordinated workshops within assigned regions; an Audio-Visual Specialist II and an Audio-Visual Specialist III who served as videographers; an Administrative Support Assistant III who served as office manager; and one Laborer.

Accomplishments

I&E provided service, material and/or coordination for promotion of the Governor's One-Shot Turkey Hunt, state-wide youth wildlife art contests, Becoming an Outdoors Woman workshops, Beyond BOW ladies' deer hunts, STEP OUTSIDE Youth Dove Hunts and many other spe-



Camping and backpacking is one of many courses taught at Becoming an Outdoors-Woman workshops.

cial projects. Photographic and audiovisual services were provided as needed.

Outdoor Alabama magazine published five issues including the annual Calendar and Conservation Directory. Subscriptions continued to grow thanks to promotions targeted at potential new subscribers.

In cooperation with the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, a permanent display was created for the Mann Wildlife Learning Museum, which relocated to Montgomery in 2003. The display includes historical information about state and federal conservation efforts, conservation pioneers and contains artifacts once in use by Division personnel.

Future Plans

The section continues to produce film footage for the proposed *Outdoor Alabama* television show.

Outdoor Alabama magazine will continue working to increase the number of paid subscriptions to the magazine through a variety of promotional projects.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The Information Technology Section was established in December 2000 to promote technological growth within the Department. The mission of the Information Technology Section is to provide quality and reliable computer hardware, software, training, and network services to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

The Information Technology Section is housed in the Folsom Administrative Building in Montgomery and has a staff of six.

Many changes were made within the Information Technology Section to improve the quality and quantity of services being provided. The section plans to continue

expanding services to central office personnel as well as DCNR field employees at district offices and parks throughout the state.

LEGAL

The Legal Section provides advice and counsel directly to the Commissioner and Operations Chief, and as a staff function, provides legal services to the directors of the five operational divisions and other Department staff.

The drafting of contracts, deeds, leases, patents, permits and attorney general opinions are also responsibilities of the Legal Section. Litigation against the Department and employees as well as litigation initiated by the Department is handled by the legal staff.

The Legal Section drafts, reviews and monitors legislation affecting the Department. Regulations for management and enforcement efforts of divisions are drafted and approved for execution and followed through the adoption process. The section is responsible for real estate transactions involving land owned or managed by the Department and for the legal work associated with the state's oil and gas leasing activity.

PERSONNEL AND PAYROLL

The Personnel and Payroll Section processes payroll and is responsible for maintenance of personnel and payroll records for all biweekly and hourly employees. The section also serves as liaison to the State Personnel Department for all personnel actions.

Facilities and Personnel

The Personnel and Payroll Section office is in the department's central Montgomery office headquarters located within the Folsom Administrative Building. The section currently employs one Departmental Personnel Manager, two Personnel Assistants, one Accounting Technician, and a Clerk Stenographer.

Accomplishments

New equipment and software have been purchased to more efficiently produce identification cards for DCNR employees. Plans are underway to get new cards for all permanent field personnel.

Future Plans

The Personnel and Payroll section is committed to continue to provide payroll and personnel support services throughout the Department.

Marine Police



The Marine Police Division provides public safety services for approximately 1 million boaters on Alabama's more than 1 million surface acres of recreational waters through a comprehensive program of enforcement and public education. This program is handled in the field by less than 60 Marine Police Officers using one-officer patrol craft and covering over 23,000 surface acres per officer. Field enforcement officers are responsible for patrol and public education within their assigned areas. Field enforcement and education are the responsibility of the Chief of Operations. An education officer, supply/inventory officer and field district supervisors comprise the Chief of Operations staff.

The administrative unit provides budgetary, fiscal, logistical and maintenance support. The boat registration unit is responsible for registration and records retention of approximately 400,000 boats. The boat registration unit also supports the boat theft unit, which consists of two Marine Police officers assigned statewide. Recovery of stolen property such as boats, motors and accessory equipment is a function of the boat theft unit.

Functions of the Marine Police Division, in addition to routine safety patrol, include registration of all pleasure boats, licensing of all boat operators, boat and marine accessory theft, a statewide Boating Education Program, and assisting other state, local and federal officers in enforcement relating to homeland security, maritime and waterway smuggling, drug interdiction, and other serious crimes committed in the marine environment. The Marine Police Division is also charged with the establishment and overview of a waterway hazard and control marking program, presently overseeing 2,000 hazard and control markers and zones.

Facilities and Personnel

The Marine Police Division maintains headquarters, a maintenance shop and warehouse in Montgomery. A training facility at Whitehall was used for training new officers hired in 2003 and in-service training, but was released at the end of the fiscal year due to the dilapidated condition of the buildings.

The state is divided into four districts for enforcement purposes. Four district headquarters are maintained at Lake Guntersville State Park, Alpine, Wind Creek State Park, and Alabama Point. These headquarters provide contact sites for the boating public, education program locations, and training facilities for district personnel. In FY 2003, the Marine Police Division operated with 72 employees statewide. This included 56 uniformed officers, 11 clerical personnel, three marine mechanics, one laborer, and the Division Director.

Budget and Expenditures

For fiscal year 2003, the Marine Police Division was authorized a budget of \$7,362,947. Total expenditures amounted to \$5,932,116. These funds were generated from boat registration fees, enforcement fines, marine fuel tax, and the boating safety assistance program from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Accomplishments

- More than 27,891 persons successfully completed the Basic Boating Course taught by Marine Police officers in 2003.
- Boat operator licenses were issued to 34,925 boat operators in 2003. A total of 500,101 operator licenses are currently on file.
- The Marine Police Division received \$127,535 in asset sharing funds from U.S. Customs for a 1988 case. The Division was the primary enforcement agency in this case.
- In February and March of 2003, the Marine Police Division was asked by the U.S. Navy to guard two of their ships while they were stopped at the Port of Mobile.
- Marine Police Officers statewide participated in Operation Liberty Shield, checking potentially vulnerable water infrastructures during a Code Orange alert.
- In August 2003, Marine Police Officers provided enforcement and crowd control at the first Alabama-based Offshore Super Powerboat Race. There were 3,400 spectators in boats and thousands more on shore for this event.
- Alabama Power Company contributed a \$35,000 grant to be used to promote public safety on the 12 Alabama Power Company impoundments.

Enforcement

In the year 2002-2003, Marine Police Officers were on patrol for 28,649 hours. There were 15,898 vessel contacts that resulted in 2,179 arrests and 4,769 written warnings. Fifty-nine arrests were made for boating under the influence of alcohol and 29 boat operator licenses were suspended or revoked in 2003.

Marine Police officers performed 841 hours of search

2002-2003 Marine Police Law Enforcement Statistics

Patrol

28,649 hours

Search and Rescue and Assists to Boaters

841 hours

Vessel Contacts

15,898

Arrests

2,179

59 for boating under the influence of alcohol

Written Warnings

4,769

Boat Operator Licenses Suspended or Revoked

and rescue and assists to boaters. Marine Police officers were called upon by other law enforcement agencies for 563 hours of assistance with various duties. There were 57 marine events permitted by the Division, resulting in 1,159 hours of security patrol.

Marine Police officers are still under orders to patrol all critical infrastructure sites on the water that are considered to be potential terrorist targets. All officers have received training on the deployment of special teams in the event of terrorist threat. Approximately 860 hours were expended on Homeland Security patrols

The Boat Theft Investigators opened 61 new cases of boat theft in 2003 that resulted in recovery of \$250,000 worth of boats and equipment. Thirty-two felony arrests and five misdemeanor cases resulted from these investigations.

During the fiscal year officers investigated 125 boating accidents that resulted in 20 fatalities and 63 serious injuries.

Public Education

The Education Section of the Alabama Marine Police Division is continuing a joint cooperative venture with the State Department of Education, Driver Education Section, with the implementation of the boating education taught in the driver education classes. Compliance increased during the 2002-2003 school year. Work is continuing to achieve the 100 percent participation, which was mandated by the Boating Safety Reform Act of 1994.

Marine Police furnishes training to the driver education instructors and participates in a series of workshops at various sites throughout the state. Marine Police is

also furnishing instructional materials such as manuals, pamphlets, videos and speakers to ensure a successful program.

The Marine Police Division and the Department of Public Safety, Driver's License Division, continue to work together in order to license the boaters of Alabama. The Marine Police Division provides the training for the driver license examiners and study guides for applicants to study for the written exam, which is conducted by the Department of Public Safety.

Statewide issuance of the boat operator's license continues to increase with a total of 34,925 licenses being issued for this reporting period. A concentrated radio, TV, and media blitz has continued to encourage the boating community to come in compliance with the vessel license requirement.

An annual statewide program was implemented by Marine Police officers recognizing National Safe Boating Week. Marine Police personnel taught 71 boating courses during the year. Officers conducted 576 public education programs and presentations with 140,859 persons in attendance. Marine Police patrol equipment and static displays were manned at public schools, boat shows, safety fairs, and other functions throughout the state.

Radio and television appearances by Marine Police officers amounted to 376; in addition, 355 newspaper articles and magazine articles were published statewide. Time expended on educational functions by the officers totaled 4,181 hours; 160,000 units of boating literature were distributed to the public; 501 hours were dedicated to placing, replacing, and repairing 334 aids to navigation on Alabama's waterways.

The state-approved online boating course, www.boat-ed.com, which was implemented last year as another alternative for the vessel license requirement, continues to receive a healthy response with 4,771 certifications being generated. Additional printed materials and videos were acquired for use in providing public education for the marine community.

Marine Police Officers worked closely with ADEM in preparation for the implementation of the Marine Sewage Act in October 2003. The officers have been compiling statistical data on marinas both with and without pump-out stations in order to facilitate the development of handouts and brochures from ADEM to marina owners, encouraging their compliance with the new laws.

Marine Police Officers have also been working closely with Lands' Coastal Section with the development and implementation of the Clean Marina Act.

Boat Registration

The Boat Registration Section is responsible for registration and records retention of approximately 400,000 boats. The total number of boats registered in FY 2002-2003 was 262,249. In addition, 26,243 ownership trans-

fers were processed. Alabama ranks 17th in the nation for total number of vessels registered. The boat registration unit also supports the boat theft unit, which consists of two Marine Police officers assigned statewide.

Significant Problems and Solutions

The most significant problem facing the Marine Police Division is a critical shortage of enforcement personnel. In order to address this problem, a source of funding must be found. Thirty additional officers will be needed over the next four years. The cost to accomplish this is estimated at \$1.5 million. With the additional responsibility of providing security and surveillance for critical infrastructure sites on the water in partnership with the Homeland Security Department, at least a 50 percent increase in personnel is necessary. At the present time, no additional funding has been provided through Homeland Security.

Capturing boat registration data on the Marine Police Division's antiquated computer program/system is becoming increasingly difficult. A customized program/system is needed not only to import data electronically from counties, but to capture and store data entered in-house and

collected from counties in the form of tapes and other media. This new system would facilitate accurate data reporting for fiscal, informational, and enforcement purposes. Increasing the cost of boat registrations is a funding source that should be considered.

Future Plans

The Division goals and objectives for fiscal year 2003-2004 are as follows:

- Fill six Marine Police Officer vacancies.
- Reduce boating fatalities.
- Reduce boating injuries.
- License 20,000 boat operators.
- Increase boating education programs by 20 percent.
- Construct new boat maintenance facility in Montgomery.
- Purchase new headquarters/training facility at Alabama Point.



Marine Police officers are often involved in search and rescue efforts.

Marine Resources

The Marine Resources Division (MRD) is responsible for the management of Alabama's marine fisheries resources through research and enforcement programs. Two division facilities supported an average of 54 employees of the Administrative, Enforcement, and Fisheries Sections during fiscal year 2003.

Budget and Expenditures

A total expenditure of \$3,809,440 was made from the approved budget of \$4,079,854. Revenue of \$4,571,349 was made up from federal aid (47 percent), license fees (36 percent), marine gas tax (13 percent), and other sources (4 percent). This plus a cash forward balance of \$889,350 provided funding of \$5,460,699 for the fiscal year.

The Administrative Section expended \$798,277 of salaries and operational expenses for division activities.

Expenditures for the Enforcement Section totaled \$1,178,197, of which \$25,000 was reimbursable by a grant from the National Marine Fisheries Service; amounts of \$542,994 and \$25,000 were reimbursable under a Joint Enforcement Agreement from NOAA/Office of Law Enforcement.

Fisheries Section expenditures were \$1,841,966, which consisted of funds from 18 federal aid programs and required state matching funds. Federal aid projects varied in-state match requirements from 0 to 25 percent. Included in these expenditures, in addition to the normal expenditures, were shell planting activities and boating access area up-keep, renovation, and construction.

Significant Problems and Solutions

A serious controversy existed around the use of gills nets along the front beach of Orange Beach, Alabama. The director worked with recreational fishermen, leaders of Orange Beach, and commercial netters to develop and present a compromise solution to the problem to the Conservation Advisory Board. The plan was accepted and incorporated into the regulations.

The number of crab traps in use in Alabama's estuarine area and the associated derelict traps continue to be a problem. Plans are still being studied to reduce the number of traps in the future along with limiting entry into this fishery. In the meantime, the Division is continuing a program utilizing volunteers to assist in removing derelict crab traps from Alabama's coastal waters.

The lack of adequate quantities of high salinity, high quality water for rearing of marine fishes such as red snapper at the CPMC continued to be a problem during FY 2003. A portion of the CIAP monies will be used to construct a pipeline from the Gulf State Park Pier to the

CPMC to solve this problem.

There is a need for authority to allow offenses committed in the Gulf of Mexico outside of the state's territorial waters to be heard in state district court. This could be accomplished by amending regulation 9-12-4.

There currently is no way to track the recreational effort expended against the marine resources with the use of gig, castnet, recreational crab traps, or spearfishing. These fishing gears need to be added to the recreational fishing license at no additional fee by amending 9-11-53.1 and 9-12-55.2.

At present commercial fishermen cannot legally sell fish caught in cast nets or with gigs because of a lack of a commercial license for this activity. A commercial license should be established for these activities.

A need to fill personnel vacancies still exists.

ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION

The Administrative Section provides supervision, clerical, purchasing, and general administrative support for the two operational sections; supervises state seismic activities; and coordinates with other state, federal and regional agencies on fisheries and environmental matters.

Staff for the Administrative Section consisted of the division director, eight clerical, one custodial worker, and one marine mechanic employee. Offices are maintained at Dauphin Island and Gulf Shores.

Accomplishments

Construction has begun on a pumping system and pipeline that will extend from the Gulf of Mexico at the Gulf State Park Pier to the CPMC. This project was funded by CIAP funds. When completed it will enhance the development of red snapper production at CPMC by providing a year-round supply of high salinity water.

The 2003 edition of the popular information calendar was produced and distributed. Another edition of the children's activity book was printed and distributed to school children throughout Alabama.

The success of the electronic trip ticket computer program continues to grow. Currently 16 Alabama seafood dealers are online with this program. These dealers contribute substantial amounts of landings data to MRD. The computer program allows seafood dealers to enter land-



ings and trip information from commercial fishermen and submit it electronically on a monthly basis.

Future Plans

After consultation with shrimp fishermen and other affected user groups, plans are being developed to permanently close portions of Grand Bay and Mobile Bay to all shrimping.

Plans are in place to continue work at the Pier Street ramp in Fairhope during the next fiscal year with the addition of a breakwater.

The Division plans to complete its Coastal Impact Assistance Program projects during 2004.

Attempts will be made to extend the jurisdiction of District Courts to offenses committed offshore from Alabama in addition to those committed fully within Alabama's territorial sea.

ENFORCEMENT SECTION

The Enforcement Section patrols Alabama's coastal waters, enforcing state and federal laws and regulations relating to the conservation and protection of marine resources. Officers also enforce laws and regulations relating to boating safety and freshwater fishing and hunting, conduct search and rescue missions, and participate in drug interdiction operations. Officers are cross-trained and deputized as National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and U.S. Customs agents and cooperate extensively with these agencies and other federal agencies. This cooperation includes coordination of joint enforcement operations, investigative and fisheries enforcement expertise, training, public safety, and other natural resource issues.

Facilities for the Enforcement Section consist of headquarters at Dauphin Island and a district office in Gulf Shores. There are 17 enforcement officers in the section, 10 stationed in Mobile County, six stationed in Baldwin County, and the Chief Enforcement Officer stationed at Dauphin Island headquarters.

Accomplishments

Enforcement officers conducted 11,489 hours of boat and shore patrol, 8,497 boat checks, 945 seafood shop inspections, 15,879 recreational fisherman checks, and issued 1,033 citations and warnings for illegal activities. Thirty-eight percent of the citations and warnings (397) were for violations of recreational fishing laws and regulations. The 400 violations of commercial fishing laws and regulations comprised 39 percent of the citations and warnings issued. Officers also issued citations and warnings for 171 violations of boating safety laws and regulations, 38 wildlife and freshwater fisheries, and 27 citations for other state and federal laws and regulations. A total of 8,713 hours was spent on administrative duties, court attendance, training, and equipment maintenance.

2002-2003 Marine Resources Law Enforcement Statistics

Patrol
11,489 Hours
Boat Checks
8,497
Seafood Shop Inspections
945
Recreational Fisherman Checks
15,879
Citations and Warnings
1,033

Officers worked 874 hours with the National Marine Fisheries Services interjurisdictional fisheries enforcement program.

Enforcement officers continued to improve and expand the Coastwatch Program, training citizens to recognize and report violations of saltwater fishing laws and regulations. Information from Coastwatch members has assisted with planning of enforcement patrols and deployment of manpower and other resources resulting in saved man-hours by not responding to inaccurate reports of violations. To date, 198 citizens have been trained at 30 training sessions held in Mobile, Baldwin, and Jefferson counties. The response to the program continues to be very positive.

The U.S. Department of Commerce appropriations budget for the 2003 fiscal year contained \$7 million earmarked for cooperative enforcement initiatives between NOAA law enforcement and state fisheries law enforcement entities. The MRD and NOAA Enforcement entered into a joint enforcement agreement pursuant to the initiative. As part of the agreement, federal dollars are dedicated to increase fisheries law enforcement efforts and compliance with federal fishery regulations along coastal Alabama and the Gulf of Mexico. Fisheries resources are cooperatively protected, managed, and conserved by state and federal governments. The MRD enforcement section received \$543,000 as part of the agreement. The money was used to purchase one offshore vessel, and surveillance equipment that has been strategically located in coastal Alabama. Additionally, it provided funding to increase patrol hours for MRD officers.

Officers attended training courses on boat handling, criminal investigation, self-defense, supervision, and other state and federal agency law enforcement programs.

Officers continued to enhance public outreach efforts to

better communicate enforcement efforts to provide important information and to foster cooperative management initiatives.

Future Plans

- Continue to develop mechanisms to improve the Coastwatch program and public outreach efforts to better communicate enforcement efforts and important information.
- Continue to develop procedures to enhance the Joint Enforcement Agreement with NOAA, assure that such agreements are implemented in future years, and seek long term funding for agreements.
- Work with other Gulf states and the National Marine Fisheries Service to implement the Gulfwide strategic fisheries enforcement plan.
- Continue to develop procedures and provide officers with training to enhance Homeland Defense activities.
- Continue to foster efforts to allow the prosecution of violations in federal waters in the District Court System in Alabama.

FISHERIES SECTION

The activities of the Fisheries Section are directed toward management of commercial and recreational fisheries in Alabama's marine and estuarine waters. These activities involve cooperative efforts with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in nearshore Federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico and with other Gulf of Mexico state agencies to develop cooperative fisheries management programs. These activities are mostly funded through federal aid programs of the U.S. Departments of Commerce (NOAA/NMFS) and Interior (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). Biological programs not covered by federal aid such as fish kill evaluation, oyster management, shrimp management efforts, and pollution investigations are supported by commercial and recreational license fees. The Section personnel also assist in oversight of natural gas activities within Alabama's coastal waters, territorial sea, and adjacent federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico and comment on applications for U.S. Army Corps of Engineer permits in the coastal area.

Fisheries facilities consist of the CPMC in Gulf Shores and the MRD Laboratory on Dauphin Island. Personnel consist of one Biologist V,

one Biologist IV, one Biologist III, four Biologists II, one Biologist I, five Biologist Aides III, eleven Biologist Aides I/II, one ASA I/II, two by-weekly laborers, and three temporary laborers.

Accomplishments

The facilities for red snapper brood fish maturation studies completed last year at the Claude Petet Mariculture Center (CPMC) have resulted in the increased production of red snapper fingerlings. The production of these fingerlings by naturally spawning fish has enabled continued cooperative research to occur between MRD, Auburn University, Alma Bryant High School and the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory in Mississippi.

Plans and specifications were formulated for a pumping system and pipeline that will extend from the Gulf of Mexico at the Gulf State Park Pier to the CPMC. This project was funded by CIAP funds. When completed it will enhance the development of red snapper production at CPMC by providing a year-round supply of high salinity water.

The fifth year of a cooperative project with Auburn University has resulted in refined techniques for raising shrimp in ponds. These will be used to enhance the production of shrimp in the shrimp farms of north central Alabama.

Four new concrete pipe fishing reefs were constructed in Mobile Bay and Mississippi Sound, bringing the total of inshore fishing reefs to 13 and completing the Roads to Reefs program. Nine large new reefs were constructed offshore in Alabama's reef zones from large-diameter concrete pipe. Benthic habitat around three gas production platforms in lower Mobile Bay was enhanced with an application of approximately 5,500 tons of soccerball-



Four new concrete pipe fishing reefs were constructed in Mobile Bay and Mississippi Sound.

sized limestone rock.

During the year 841 fisheries assessment samples were taken, 91 habitat assessments were performed, and 4,477 fishermen were interviewed during creel surveys.

Federal Aid

Wallop/Breaux: These funds are administered through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Funds used from this source by the MRD were directed toward a creel survey of Alabama's saltwater recreational anglers; production of the 2003 edition of the popular Marine Information Calendar; construction of artificial fishing reefs in the Gulf of Mexico offshore from Alabama and inshore in Mobile Bay; maintaining equipment and facilities in Gulf Shores and Dauphin Island; managing the public artificial fishing reef permits issuing system in the Gulf of Mexico off Alabama; assisting individuals in designing artificial reefs; conducting mariculture research on red snapper; maintaining and enhancing boat ramps for boating access; conducting a study of the attraction of juvenile red snapper to small patch reefs; and testing various offshore artificial reef modules with respect to attractant qualities and durability. An additional project to coordinate all federal aid programs within the MRD and coordinate with other Gulf states was also funded from this source.

Personnel also revised the Alabama Marine Resources Activity Book, which provides an interactive format for educating elementary students about the life cycles and habits of local organisms.

Adult Finfish Sampling Program: Alabama's MRD continues a fishery independent gillnet sampling program. The objective is to gather data on adult fish to be used in assessing the status of the stocks of important species. Sampling is being conducted through the use of two gillnet configurations and a stratified random design. In 2003, 7,198 finfish representing 49 species were collected. A stock assessment of striped mullet was submitted to the director.

Cooperative Statistics: Federal aid funds for this program are administered by the Department of Commerce (NOAA/NMFS) and are utilized by the MRD to collect data on commercial shrimp, oyster, crab and finfish landings. Additionally, information on processed seafood such as picked crab meat is compiled. Landings information was collected from these fisheries. Biological information was collected on striped mullet, flounder, red snapper and Spanish mackerel. Commercial seafood license information was stored on MRD computers in a specifically designed database.

Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP): Funds from this program are administered by the Department of Commerce and are utilized in Alabama for the development of a long term fishery-independent data base on recreationally and commercially important marine and estuarine fishery stocks. This project provides funds to assist in management of

the Alabama shrimp fishery and evaluate spawning success and juvenile survival for important recreational and commercial species. It also provides funds for a project to independently assess the local red snapper population by video camera and fish trap sampling conducted in Alabama's offshore artificial reef permit areas in the Gulf of Mexico.

The Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics

Survey: All quotas established by the NMFS were met or exceeded in 2003. Division personnel completed 2,687 fishermen interviews. Through July 2003, the most recent data available, over 142,000 fish were identified representing 66 species; of these, 6,684 fish were measured. The Division continued the Vessel Directory Telephone Survey in cooperation with the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission and other Gulf states. This survey has greatly improved the estimates of effort within the charter boat industry. An economic survey was completed in June to assist in calculating the value of the charter fishing fleet in the Gulf of Mexico.

Otolith Sampling Program: In January 2002 AMRD began collecting otoliths (ear stones) primarily from red snapper, greater amberjack, king mackerel, and Southern and Gulf flounder caught by commercial and recreational fishermen. Otoliths are used to age fish. A total of 3,332 otoliths were collected in 2003.

Commercial Trip Ticket Program: Funding for this program is provided through the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission. This program is part of a Gulfwide effort to generate more specific information for each commercial fishery by collecting fisheries data from each fishing trip. Trip tickets are printed in triplicate form and supplied to Alabama seafood dealers. Seafood dealers are required to complete the trip ticket for each transaction. An alternative form of submission is an electronic entry program. A computer program allows seafood dealers to enter landings and trip information and submit it electronically via the internet on a monthly basis. Data from the completed trip tickets is scanned into a computer, verified and edited. Monthly data is sent to the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission and will ultimately be supplied to the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Coastal Impact Assessment Program: CIAP funds, administered through the Lands Division, were utilized in a program to remove derelict crab traps from Alabama coastal waters and beaches. The program resulted in the removal of 1,074 derelict traps. CIAP funds used to date have also provide two renovated boat ramps and several inshore and offshore artificial reefs.

Non-Federal Aid

Alabama Oyster Reef Enhancement: A formally barren bottom and a marginally productive oyster reef in Portersville Bay, Mississippi Sound, Alabama, were planted with a total of 20,000 cubic yards of oyster cultch



These boat ramps were renovated with money from the Coastal Impact Assessment Program.

material in 2002 to enhance oyster growth and create a new reef in this formally productive section of Alabama waters. Both areas were surveyed by dredge in July 2003 and had caught an excellent spat set. Oysters in this area should be of harvestable size in late summer 2004.

Biological and enforcement personnel worked together to collect data at oyster checkpoints, enabling the development of sound management measures for sustaining the oyster resources. Data collected assisted in increasing the accuracy of assessment of the status of Alabama oyster stocks.

The MRD also continued the cooperative endeavor with Auburn University and the new Alma May Bryant High School in Mobile County to provide a mariculture training center at the high school. This continues to be a very successful program which expands students' ability to participate in future fisheries.

Future Plans

The Fisheries Section will continue to collect appropriate data and work with recreational and commercial fishermen and other resource user groups to provide Division administrators with recommendations for strategies and regulations for management.

Development of mariculture procedures for commercially and recreationally important marine organisms will continue. This will be enhanced by the completion of a saltwater supply pipeline from the Gulf State Park in Gulf Shores to CPMC.

Cooperative projects will continue to be initiated with Auburn University, the Dauphin Island Sealab, and the University of South Alabama to investigate artificial reef benefits and red snapper production enhancement.

Inshore assessment and monitoring work will be continued monthly with the addition of new stations in order to provide a more comprehensive depiction of Alabama's marine waters and resources.

Continuation of the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey in Alabama is recommended to include creels of anglers on charter boats, private boats, and shoreline and a continuation of the telephone survey to better define effort within the charter fishery.

The effort to remove derelict crab traps will continue with an expanded program scheduled for the spring of 2004.

We will continue collecting Alabama commercial seafood landings data via Alabama's Trip Ticket Program and to continue the collection of commercial biological fishery dependent data.

State Lands



The State Lands Division (SLD) manages undeveloped, state-owned trust lands that are specific as to their identity as well as to the income beneficiary. The lands are currently identified as Sixteenth Section and Indemnity School Lands of approximately 30,000 acres; approximately 7,000 acres of Mental Health/Mental Retardation Department trust lands; Muscle Shoals Grant Lands of approximately 8,000 acres; and other lands, including submerged lands (inland and coastal) of approximately 600,000 acres. In addition, the SLD manages certain resources on University of Montevallo, Auburn University and Department of Transportation lands. Resource uses include oil and gas exploration and development, timber

harvesting, farming, coal mining, hunting leases and commercial uses.

The SLD maintains the State Land Resource Information Center, which is the database of all lands owned by the State of Alabama and its departments, agencies and institutions. These records reflect lands acquired, owned, managed or disposed of by all state agencies and institutions. Records are submitted by each agency, checked against individual county tax assessment records and entered into the division's Geographic Information System database.

The Forever Wild Public Land Acquisition Program is managed by the SLD at the direction of the program's Board of Trustees. Division personnel provide administrative support including coordination of the assessment and appraisal process, purchase negotiations, land purchase transactions, budget preparation and annual reporting to the Governor and Legislature.

The SLD conducts sales of excess state lands pursuant to the State Land Sales and Leasing Act. This law establishes a procedure aimed at assuring that the state receives full fair market value for lands that it sells or leases and that the procedure is open, competitive and subject to public scrutiny.

Alabama's official natural heritage database is maintained by the SLD. Animal and plant species and areas of biological significance that make up the rich natural diversity of our state are identified and inventoried. This effort provides important biological information to conservation organizations, developers, governmental agencies and the public in general. It also complements the goals of Forever Wild.

The SLD fosters conservation education and research through programs offered at the Wehle Nature Centers in Bullock and Baldwin Counties, the Weeks Bay Reserve in Baldwin County and the Foster Wetland Conservation Tract in Mobile County.

The SLD conducts coastal resource management and planning through the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program (ACAMP). The ACAMP purpose is to promote, improve and safeguard the lands and waters located in Alabama's coastal area through a comprehensive and cooperative program designed to preserve, enhance and develop such valuable resources for the well-being of present and future generations. This program works in cooperation with the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, and is federally funded by the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management,

State Lands Division

Sources of Receipts	Total Income
Commercial leases	\$54,135
Oil and Gas Leases (Royalties)	\$273,619,570*
8(g) Payments (Federal offshore shares)	\$13,201,901
Timber sales	\$174,350
Coal Leases	\$236,250
Coal Gas	\$503,641
Misc., Easements, Fees, and Permits	\$653,580
TOTAL	\$288,443,427

Distribution of State Lands Division Receipts

Alabama Trust Fund	\$283,159,098
Department of Education	\$16,993
School Trust Lands	\$642,245
Auburn University	\$4,985
Mental Health/ Mental Retardation Department	\$51,272
Department of Conservation	
State Lands Division	\$4,055,502
State Parks Division	\$14,706
Marine Resources	\$440
Other State Agencies	
Forestry Commission	\$9,350
Department of Transportation	\$207,222
Historical Commission	\$216,495
Forever Wild	\$65,120
TOTAL	\$288,443,427

*Figure includes royalty adjustments and settlements in the amount of \$26,957,884.09.



Construction was completed on the Gatra L. Wehle Nature Center at Historic Blakeley State Park.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the Department of Commerce. This function complements the Division's responsibilities for management of submerged lands.

The SLD implements the Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) for the State of Alabama. The CIAP is a federally funded program under NOAA designed to mitigate for impacts from Outer Continental Shelf activities. Specifically, the State of Alabama CIAP is comprised of 35 projects, approved by the Governor and the Secretary of Commerce, aimed at conserving and enhancing natural resources in the two coastal counties – Baldwin and Mobile. The SLD administers all contracts associated with CIAP and coordinates closely with NOAA to ensure program compliance.

The SLD manages these responsibilities through three sections: Administrative, Natural Heritage and Coastal. Specific accomplishments by each section for this past year follow.

Administrative Section Accomplishments:

- Processed numerous nominations for sales and leases of state-owned land pursuant to the provisions of the State Land Sales and Leasing Act. Included in this activity was trust land leased for purposes of hunting.
- Processed a number of requests for oil, gas and mineral leases on state-owned lands including submerged water bottoms.
- Administered the Forever Wild Land Trust program and facilitated the acquisition of the following nine tracts of land around the State totaling 2,354 acres:

- Grand Bay Savannah Addition Tract (Mobile County) – 662 acres;
- Riverlands Tract (Baldwin County) – 91 acres;
- Turkey Branch Tract (Baldwin County) – 19.46 acres;
- Mobile-Tensaw Delta-McMillan 1 Tract (Baldwin County) – 181 acres;
- Shoal Creek Preserve Tract (Lauderdale County) – 298 acres;
- Mobile-Tensaw Delta-McMillan 2&3 Tracts (Baldwin County) - 459 acres;
- Sipsey Randolph Tract (Tuscaloosa County) – 153 acres;
- Lillian Swamp South Addition (Baldwin County) – 238 acres; and
- Splinter Hill Bog-Ben May Trust (Baldwin County) – 363 acres.
- Continued implementation of the State of Alabama Coastal Impact Assistance Program. Annual accomplishments of this program include:
 - Acquisition of four tracts of land in Baldwin and Mobile counties;
 - Construction of nearshore reefs to enhance fishery habitat;
 - Construction of two public access boat ramps; one on Fort Morgan in Baldwin County, the other on Dauphin Island in Mobile County; and

- Development of the Gulf Shores Sportsplex Wetlands Park.
- Coordinated Departmental activities relating to the Natural Resource Damage Assessment program including training, data collection, site inspections and participation in Natural Resource Trustee Council meetings.
- Responded to numerous requests from agencies and the public regarding information contained in the Land Resource Information Center (LRIC) database. Staff also worked with a number of state agencies to update information regarding state land ownership.
- Coordinated Division efforts of the 2003 Conservation Celebration Expo event held at Oak Mountain State Park.
- Field staff continued routine land management activities including boundary marking, timber cruising, prescribed burning and law enforcement.
- Constructed and opened the Gatra L. Wehle Nature Center at Blakeley State Park.

Natural Heritage Section Accomplishments

- Continued development and growth of the Natural Heritage database. To date, the database contains approximately 340,000 independent biological records of plants, animals, and natural communities. This year's efforts have focused on database refinement to support development of the Natural Heritage Plan.
- Continued routine inventory activities on various tracts managed by the Division. Staff also assisted other state and federal agencies in inventory activities on their lands.
- Scouted access points and trail locations for the Mobile-Tensaw Delta and Sipsey River Swamp Tracts. Further, staff worked with the City of Anniston to develop a parking lot and trail system for the Coldwater Mountain tract.
- Secured additional land acquisition grant funding for purchases within the Mobile-Tensaw Delta in Baldwin and Mobile Counties. Further, staff continued working on implementation of previously awarded land acquisition grant funding.
- Implemented a \$440,000 EPA/ADEM grant for Baldwin county wetland restoration activities. Fifty percent of the award is being utilized for restoration activities on lands managed by the SLD within the Mobile-Tensaw Delta, Weeks Bay and Lillian Swamp.
- Implemented CIAP funded projects including Bartram canoe trail development, land management activities on the Grand Bay Savannah Tract, and removal of abandoned camps in the Mobile-Tensaw Delta.

- Section personnel served as support to the Forever Wild Land Trust Board of Directors. Staff activities included reviewing new Forever Wild tract nominations, determining the status of tract nomination availability, inspecting and scoring nominated tracts, and disseminating information to the Board.
- Responded to requests from the public and the regulated community for information from the Natural Heritage database to assist in wise land development practices. Staff also fulfilled requests for maps and other GIS products.
- Devoted significant time towards development of a State of Alabama Natural Heritage Plan. Staff has nearly completed a first draft of this product.
- Provided outdoor educational opportunities to the public through presentations, tract tours, speeches and field trips. These included presentations at the Wehle Nature Center in Midway, Alabama, participation in Becoming an Outdoors Woman program, and sponsoring the Birding Awareness Day.

Coastal Section Accomplishments

Fairhope Office

- Facilitated improvements to eight public water access sites in Mobile and Baldwin counties.



- Coordinated the 16th Annual Alabama Coastal Cleanup, where 3,828 volunteers removed 82,614 pounds of litter from 303 miles of Alabama coastline.
- Printed and released the fourth edition of the "Alabama Coastal Counties Environmental Handbook," a directory of federal, state, and local agencies focusing on natural resource conservation and management.
- Assisted in the engineering, design and environmental work for the beach nourishment project at the Gulf State Park.
- Facilitated the mapping of impervious surfaces in Baldwin and Mobile counties.
- Sponsored the acquisition of digital color infrared aerial photography of Mobile County.
- Sponsored coastal area workshops on stream restoration and stormwater best management practices (BMPs).

- Initiated a water quality survey of the Bayou Sara watershed.
- Developed and submitted final program approval documentation along with five- and 15-year planning strategies for the Alabama Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program.
- Facilitated the development of a Green Space Plan and enhancements to McNally Park in Mobile County.
- Began the second five-year session of the monthly National Marine Debris Monitoring Program.
- Participated in 24 public education and outreach events including the Alabama Conservation Celebration Expo, Annual Bay Area Earth Day, Household Hazardous Waste Day, Discovery Kids Day, Derelict Crab Trap Removal Day, and Mobile County/City Day.
- Taught 128 Baldwin County students from grades 2-12 the environmental science classroom lessons of Aquatic Nuisance Species, Non-Point Source Pollution, Household Hazardous Waste and Groundwater Pollutions.
- Assisted in state acquisition of 110 acres of wetland habitat in the Weeks Bay Reserve watershed.
- Reserve Interpretive Center visited by an estimated 20,000 visitors from 50 states and over six countries
- Completed a Market Analysis and Needs Assessment on the Coastal Training Program for the Gulf Coast area of south Alabama.
- Hosted numerous educational workshops on topics including Nonpoint Source Pollution and Watersheds, Conservation Easements, Decentralized Wastewater, and OnSite Sewage Management.
- Co-Sponsored Weeks Bay Appreciation Day in April with the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation.
- Hosted teacher training workshops on topics including the national Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) project and Project Learning Tree.
- Hosted the Tenth Annual Native Plant Sale that promotes landscaping with native plants.
- Reserve research staff continued Systemwide Monitoring Project and coordinated with over 14 visiting researchers on eight different projects.
- Reserve staff participated in the Alabama-Mississippi Rapid Assessment Team (AMRAT) assessment of Mobile Bay on the plant team. This provided a rapid assessment for invasive species in the area.
- Continued implementation of the Weeks Bay Nature Trail Restoration Project.

Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

- Completed a capital improvement project providing additional laboratory space and a facilities for researchers.
- Renovated lobby exhibits in partnership with Auburn University.
- Completed bulkhead repairs to a hurricane-damaged docking area on Weeks Bay.

State Parks

The State Parks Division operates and maintains 24 state parks encompassing approximately 50,000 acres of land and water in Alabama. The parks range from Gulf Coast beaches to Appalachian mountains providing opportunities and facilities from basic day-use activities, to resort convention lodging, restaurant and golfing areas.

The mission of the Division is to acquire and preserve natural areas; to develop, furnish, operate and maintain recreational facilities, and to extend the public's knowledge of the state's natural environment.

The Division's goals are to manage and operate the State Parks system in an economically sound and efficient manner on the most self-sustaining basis possible; to provide and maintain high quality facilities and services to meet the needs of visitors; to provide an opportunity for personal growth and development of individuals through outdoor experiences; to promote use of State Parks facilities; to preserve unique natural features and integrity of State Parks for future generations and to promote good will and enhance the public image of Alabama, and the Alabama State Parks through dedicated, courteous employees.

Accomplishments

The division continued to operate and maintain 24 state parks serving more than 5 million guests annually on a constantly decreasing operational budget.

Additional significant accomplishments were made in improving purchasing procedures, computer systems, operation and maintenance policies, financial management analysis, advertising and marketing, and natural resource management.

Facilities and Personnel

Each of the 24 operational state parks has an internal park staff determined by size, development and operation of each area. Total employees for all parks vary from approximately 1,000 during peak season to approximately 700 during the off-season.

The Parks Division central office in Montgomery includes six sections: Administrative, Operations and Maintenance, Purchasing, Management Analysis, Natural Resources and Advertising/Marketing, and operates with a total of 19 assigned staff.

Problems and Solutions

Lack of sufficient funds for total renovation and repair of aging facilities and replacement of worn out equipment is the major problem for State Parks. A source of steady,



level funding to support prioritized facility maintenance is the necessary solution to this problem. It is hoped that increased park utilization and revenue generated as stimulated by the pending renovations will be a solution to this basic parks issue.

MANAGEMENT ANALYSIS SECTION

The responsibilities and functions of the Management Analysis Section are to provide general administrative direction and coordination for management control, administrative cost analysis, performance reporting, data processing, general accounting, budgeting, payables, receivables and purchasing.

Accomplishments

Section personnel received, processed and analyzed more than 2,600 performance reports for all state parks; prepared Park System Performance Reports as required by the Budget Management Act; received, processed and analyzed operations plans, budget reports and related reports; prepared Park System Operation Plan reporting and fiscal year budget; processed approximately \$33,735,495 in receipts and more than 35,919 payment vouchers; and disbursed approximately 36,063 warrants and payroll checks through and from the State Accounting System.

Section staff also continuously monitored data processing output, distributed it to statewide park cost centers, monitored managerial audits as well as personnel actual versus budget for each state park. Management Analysis is continuing to work with Central Accounting Data Processing and developing detailed monthly financial statements as it relates to overall financial aspects of the State Parks System as well as specific operations. Management Analysis continued to revise resale inventory procedures to promote better accountability.

Future Plans

- Increase programming to streamline automated accounting at park level in order to monitor business and personnel.
- Continue to improve monthly financial reports generated through IT Data Processing to aid managers in making

financial decisions relating to business and personnel.

- Analyze individual park facilities to determine the cost effectiveness.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The Natural Resources Section was created in 1982 to manage the scientific and biological aspects of all State Park land and water areas. Administrative functions include managing, protecting and enhancing state parks' natural resources and providing opportunities for public access and enjoyment of natural resource areas via nature trails, environmental programs and special events. This section also coordinates in-house State Parks grants administration.

Accomplishments

Many park guests are entertained and educated through interpretive recreational activity and environmental education programs. Full-time interpretive programs are conducted at Gulf, Oak Mountain, DeSoto, and Lake Guntersville State Parks.

Natural Resources personnel assisted with the annual Eagle Awareness events at Lake Guntersville State Park; conducted Lake Eufaula's Fins, Feathers and Flowers Program; produced audio-visual programs on waterfowl, songbirds, raptors and other environmental topics; updated hiking and nature trail maps; and assisted in upgrading trails at Oak Mountain, Lake Guntersville, Joe Wheeler, Cheaha and DeSoto State Parks.

The staff coordinated National Trail Day events at Oak Mountain and Lake Guntersville State Parks and assisted in the annual Coastal Cleanup event at Gulf State Park.

Natural Resources staff produced brochure and magazine material, attended the 2003 State Park Program Seminar, planned several Earth Day activities, maintained and improved the bi-weekly Park Naturalist Information Exchange Program. They assisted, consulted with and served on boards of organizations, and implemented a prescription burn plan for the enhancement of a pitcher plant/longleaf pine community at Gulf State Park.

Natural Resources personnel expanded an introductory course in basic fire management in the spring for parks field personnel. Further planning towards establishing classes through the Wild Land Fire Academy at Oak Mountain State Park were finalized as were plans to establish prescribed burn areas in five other state parks. Section personnel enhanced natural habitat wildlife exhibits for lodges and nature centers, provided exhibits for school groups, environmental events, camping and boat show promotional events, conferences and meetings. They monitored white-tailed deer populations at Oak Mountain and Lake Guntersville and coordinated activities with the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Nongame Wildlife Program and the Forever Wild Land Acquisition Program.

Staff also participated in National Fishing Day, the Conservation Expo and kid's partnerships programs at several state parks. Natural Resources staff applied for and received grant funding extensions for beach habitat enhancement at Gulf State Park and Recreation Trails Program funds for Peavine Falls Trailhead and Trail at Oak Mountain State Park.

Natural Resources staff additionally applied for and received federal grant funds for the construction of three transient boat piers at Joe Wheeler State Park and boat pump-out station grants for Lakepoint Resort, Joe Wheeler and Lakepoint State Parks.

Staff coordinated scientific collection permit requests for various park locations; aided in the Perdido Key Beach Mouse Study at Alabama Point, Gulf State Park; conducted fish management programs at park lakes; conducted aquatic vegetation reduction programs in various state park lakes with the further introduction of grass carp; coordinated diseased timber removal statewide; assisted with forest insect and fungus research projects; conducted forest fire danger notification and suppression programs and coordinated contract preparation, timber marking and removal following southern pine beetle damage at various state parks.

The Natural Resources Section was also successful in hiring a Forest Program Specialist in April 2003. His duties included a prescribe burn and timber thinning project at Paul Grist State Park; marking, bidding and coordinating a contract for selectively thinning timber in the Lakepoint Resort State Park campground and marking timber for a similar thinning project proposed for the Lake Guntersville State Park campground. Natural Resources personnel reviewed and commented on hundreds of environmental compliance permit requests, participated in field evaluations of properties nominated for Forever Wild Land Acquisition and were involved in several LWCF conversion projects.

Staff also completed a study on whitetail deer population at Lake Guntersville and Oak Mountain State Parks.

Land encroachment, boundary line disputes/discrepancies and conflicts are handled continuously as the situation dictates. In this effort the section continues to upgrade Alabama State Parks deed files to establish procedures to maintain verified boundaries.

In 2002, the Natural Resources Section also assumed current and future responsibility for coordination, administration and management of all Alabama State Parks, Alabama Bass Trail duties including tournament scheduling, logistical planning, contract negotiation and preparation, tournament facility improvements and on-site supervision.

Problems and Solutions

The section continues to face the problem of insufficient funding for serious problems such as correcting



Guntersville State Park

lake siltation situations at numerous parks, expanding the environmental education program, constructing much-needed nature centers and initiating a greatly needed and long overdue park boundary survey and marking program. Funds have not been available for these projects, and solutions are still being sought.

Future Plans

- Expand environmental education and interpretative facilities, activities and staff as needs and funds justify.
- Recommend construction of a nature center at Lake Guntersville; redesign Oak Mountain's nature center; add an interpretive program and possible facility at Joe Wheeler State Park, continue construction of natural habitat exhibits, and expand the nature center at Gulf State Park.
- Increase special winter events.
- Expand park timber and understory plant management to improve wildlife habitat carrying capacity, park aesthetics and timber production capability.
- Manage healthy wildlife populations compatible with habitat carrying capacity and enhance public wildlife observation opportunities.
- Manage aquatic programs for environmental quality and public enjoyment.
- Facilitate more training opportunities for parks field personnel in wildland fire behavior and prescription burn practices.
- Seek greater awareness of State Parks through articles in magazines and other publications.

- Produce trail maps and natural resource management brochures and increase public communication to strengthen environmental responsibility among park guests.
- Explore the possibility of collecting field data through Geographical Information Systems to enable State Parks to more adequately inventory natural resources and produce color-coded maps of significant importance.

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

The Operations and Maintenance Section provides daily supervision for park managers and superintendents

to ensure that more than 5 million annual park visitors enjoy high quality recreation facilities and services. The Operations and Maintenance Section staff logs many hours in the field inspecting facilities and equipment, investigating complaints and providing guidance to field personnel.

The section staff supervises a 19-man construction crew composed of a supervisor, electricians, masons, laborers, and carpenters. The crew works on large and small projects in all parks that require more manpower or skill than is available at the park level. Many of these projects are park renovation projects funded by the state park renovation bonds. The Operation Section staff has been involved in inspections and pre-construction input for the renovation projects that are currently in progress or that have been completed.

Section personnel reviewed, approved and forwarded to the personnel section more than 500 hourly employee personnel action forms.

Twenty-one merit system positions were filled after interviews and recommendations from the Operations and Maintenance Section.

Law enforcement training was conducted and coordinated by the operations staff for 49 state park officers.

More than 1,201 accident/incident/offense and arrest reports were submitted by the parks to this section for review and analysis.

Section personnel work with auditors and park staff to account for more than 5,500 inventory items. The transfer, addition and deletion of inventory items are processed by the Operation Section.

Numerous insurance claims were filed by staff with Risk

Management on various park structures. A yearly review of insurance coverage is conducted to insure that adequate coverage is maintained on the 800 park structures.

The section staff investigated and made recommendations on 29 Board of Adjustment Claims that were filed against the State Parks Division. The section staff represented the Parks Division at Board of Adjustment hearings and testified concerning these claims before the Board.

An equipment inspection and evaluation program is conducted by section staff to determine equipment needs and priorities.

The State Park Operations and Maintenance Section staff and Construction Crew worked on or completed the following projects this 2002-2003 year:

Cathedral Caverns—Driveways were constructed at the new maintenance shop and staff house area.

Cheaha—The statewide construction crew built a new road for access to the fuel storage tank as part of the renovation of the group lodge; commodes and sinks were installed in the dressing rooms at the pool; new wiring and electrical boxes were installed at the lower campground.

Chickasaw—A sign honoring the Civilian Conservation Corp was built and dedicated.

Claude Kelley—Electrical service and windows were installed at the new maintenance building; the tile floor was replaced and a new roof installed on the cabin.

DeSoto—Roofing repairs due to storm damage and electrical work was completed on the cabins; repairs were made to the laundry that was damaged by a fire.

Frank Jackson—The roof was replaced on the staff house.

Gulf—A project to repair the flooring in the 11 campground bathhouses is under way. The construction crew also helped with roof repairs and clean-up from storm damage at Gulf State Park.

New carpet was installed in all 72 rooms on the east side of Gulf State Park Lodge; new flooring was installed in a cabin and a staff house in the kitchen and bathrooms; temporary repairs were made to the concrete on the Gulf State Park Lodge.

Guntersville—New walls and flooring were installed in the bathhouse in the Town Creek Campground; the tile floors in the main campground bathhouses were repaired; areas were cleared and planted for wildlife food plots.

Lake Lurleen—The septic system in the staff housing area was replaced.

Lakepoint—An area of shoreline was cleared in the campground to allow access to Lake Eufaula and a new sewage pump was installed at the marina at Lakepoint State Park; the outside of the Lodge was painted.

Meaher—New wiring and 50 amp power boxes were installed in the camping area at Meaher State Park.

Monte Sano—The roof on the park manager's house and maintenance shop were replaced; new playground

equipment was installed in the picnic area.

Oak Mountain—The picnic area was improved; a hill was removed to prevent erosion and provide a more level area for visitors to use; a portion of the dirt that was removed was used to build the new BMX (bicycle racing) track and was used to rebuild the Peavine Falls hiking trail.

The old BMX track was located in the main picnic area and there was limited parking in this area. A new BMX track and building have been completed in another area of the park.

The older half of the Treetop Trail was renovated. The work involved replacing decking, rails and rebuilding the bird cages; electrical, landscaping, and road improvement projects were completed so that the park could host the first Alabama Conservation Expo; areas were cleared and planted for wildlife food plots.

Paul M. Grist—The installation of 50 amp service in the six site campground at Paul M. Grist State Park has been completed.

Rickwood Caverns—A 1,000 gallon septic tank and field lines were installed; a portion of the cave electrical wiring was replaced.

Joe Wheeler—Repairs were completed on 15 hotel rooms that had been damaged from frozen water lines; three brick cabins were renovated; the group lodge had a new roof installed.

Wind Creek—electrical hookups were installed on boat docks; construction began on a new bathhouse in the "B" area; work was begun to build seven small cabins in the campground.

STATE PARKS PROMOTIONS

The Alabama State Parks Promotions Section was created in 1983 to coordinate the overall advertising, marketing and promotional efforts of the Alabama State Parks system.

Administrative functions include coordination of radio and television public service announcements; preparation and distribution of promotional literature; coordination of print and photographic material for magazine and newspaper articles; cooperation and coordination with the Alabama Bureau of Tourism and Travel, chambers of commerce, convention and visitors bureaus, tourist associations and special events promoters; evaluation of advertising opportunities; purchasing of advertising space; production of ads and advertising materials; tabulation and evaluation of marketing data; assistance with individual State Parks promotional efforts; participation in travel shows, sport and boat shows, special events and exhibits, continuous maintenance and expansion of a promotional photograph library; preparation and presentation of programs for civic clubs and other organizations and

the operation of a central park information and reservation service.

Accomplishments

The Promotions Section coordinated and assisted in production of numerous in-state and out-of-state magazine and newspaper articles.

It has evaluated, improved and reprinted numerous state park brochures to satisfy public, private, state and federal tourism requests.

The Promotions Section continually evaluates print media advertising opportunities and designs/produces associated advertisements.

The 1-800-ALA-PARK telephone reservation and information telephone system continues to receive extensive use. In addition to the calls transferred directly to the various park field locations via the system's menu service, the central reservations office also handles a steady flow of calls.

Another significant innovation and improvement to the Parks Promotions Section is the continuous improvement of the State Park website and direct email capabilities. It is anticipated that as time, technology and public awareness increases more people will secure parks information via our website and email rather than via our toll free telephone system.

The section continues to receive and evaluate advertising opportunities, collect and evaluate marketing data, coordinate printing and distribution of brochures, cooperate with other state promotional agencies and respond to requests for specialty material, presentations and promotional exhibits.

Problems and Solutions

The most significant problem facing the State Park Advertising and Marketing Section is the lack of sufficient advertising funds, staff and necessary advertising production equipment to properly advertise, market and promote the Alabama State Parks.

Future Plans

The Promotions Section will continue to increase public awareness and patronage of the Alabama State Parks through a variety of advertising, marketing and promotional opportunities.

A major effort will be directed toward continual revision of the existing comprehensive color brochure and the rate brochure into more user-friendly promotional efforts. Production of getaway packages will also be stressed while production of individual resort parks color brochures will be tempered in consideration of the State Parks Renovation Program. Providing accurate public awareness information pertaining to the State Parks Renovation Program will also be a goal of the Promotions Section.

The State Parks slide and photo library will also be evaluated with plans for much needed expansion and updating.

The Section will also become more promotionally interactive with the Bureau of Tourism and Travel, convention and visitors bureaus, chambers of commerce, tourist associations and civic groups throughout Alabama and the Southeast. The section will also strive to increase and improve our electronic media access and advertising via internet and email activities.

We will also attempt to increase the section staff, production capabilities and budget to better accomplish the goals and objectives of the State Parks Division.

STATE PARKS PURCHASING SECTION

The State Parks Purchasing Section handles all purchasing activities for 24 State Parks, six golf courses and six motel and lodge complexes. Money for these purchases comes from various sources, such as: bond money, timber sales, donations, insurance, park revenues, Federal grants and other funds.

The Purchasing Office maintains a record of purchases, assists in paying vendors and works with Management Analysis Section to assure accurate accounting data.

The Purchasing Section consists of one supervisor, one full-time clerical and one part-time clerical employee, and operates under the laws and guidelines established by the Code of Alabama, Title 41, and the policies and procedures established by the Alabama Department of Finance.

Accomplishments

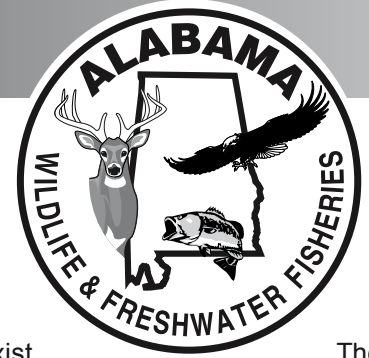
Accomplishments for the Purchasing Office for Fiscal Year 2003 include: routine purchases, emergency purchases and annual agreements. Cutbacks this year prevented the purchase of major equipment items and uniforms for park employees. Most purchases were of a routine nature to continue operations.

Some purchases during the year included: trees purchased from timber sales for Lake Guntersville State Park, stoves and refrigerators from renovation funds for Gulf Park, new campground electrical wire for Cheaha Park, two handicapped-accessible golf carts for Oak Mountain State Park, playground equipment for Monte Sano State Park, building materials for Wind Creek State Park's cabins and bathhouse, commercial washers and dryers to replace those lost in the laundry room fire at DeSoto Lodge, and a utility vehicle bought from grant money to be used for maintaining trails at Oak Mountain State Park.

Future Plans

- To continue to provide services to parks and lodges for their purchasing needs.

Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries



The Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, charged by law with protection, management and enhancement of the state's fish and wildlife resources, is composed of the Administrative, Enforcement, Fisheries, and Wildlife Sections. The Division meets these responsibilities by carrying out coordinated, scientifically-sound enforcement, management, research, development, and educational programs designed to ensure protection and enhancement of fish and wildlife populations and habitats for the sustainable benefit of the people of Alabama.

ADMINISTRATIVE

The Administrative Section carried out support services regarding personnel, budget, accounting, licenses, and property management. Activities were monitored and documentation maintained to ensure compliance with Federal Aid requirements. Planning and coordination of Division programs were conducted.

There are 10 staff members in the Section: Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Director, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Assistant Director, Aircraft Pilot II, Conservation Management Analyst, two Biologist IIIs, Accounting Technician I, ASA III, ASA II, and ASA I.

ENFORCEMENT

The Law Enforcement Section of the Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries assists in management and enhancement of Alabama's wildlife and freshwater fish resources through a sound enforcement program.

Facilities and Personnel

The Law Enforcement Section is headquartered in the Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries office in Montgomery. This office is staffed by the Chief Enforcement Officer, an Assistant Chief of Operations, an Assistant Chief of Administration, one ASA I (vacant), one ASA II, one ASA III, one Account Clerk, one Police Communications Officer I, and four Radio Operators (two vacant). The staff assists in processing vehicle repairs; ordering, receiving, and issuing supplies and equipment; issuing permits, making field investigations and other duties involving the enforcement program.

The section is organized into six districts with each district supervisor being assigned to a district office. Each district has from 10 to 12 counties. Each district has a captain as supervisor, two lieutenants as assistant supervisors, and usually two officers per county. An investigative unit is staffed with one lieutenant as supervisor and four investigator positions (one vacant), which have the rank of sergeant. A special task force consists of retired

officers who are POST certified. These officers are employed on a part-time basis and are used in problem areas of the state or where vacancies exist.

The Law Enforcement Section is authorized 130 uniformed field officers. Eighteen of these positions are sergeants who are field supervisors with three per district. Currently, the Section has 108 field officers on staff due to retirements and resignations. Current vacancies include one area sergeant and 21 field officers.

Conservation Enforcement Officer Larry Hicks of Pike County received the Legislative Medal of Honor Award. Clarke County Conservation Enforcement Officer Lance Horner drowned in the line of duty while assisting a fellow officer. Conservation Enforcement Officer John Whidbee of DeKalb County was shot and injured while attempting to arrest an illegal night hunter.

Accomplishments

Arrests and Warnings: Officers made 6,878 arrests and issued 1,146 warnings during the 2002-2003 fiscal year, the majority being for violations of Fish and Wildlife regulations with the remainder being for violations of Marine Police, Marine Resources, and other state laws.

Training: Two officers were certified as Firearms Instructors. All officers completed an eight-hour course in PPCT and a four-hour SSGT refresher course. All officers and supervisors completed an eight-hour B.U.I. enforcement training course.

Equipment Purchases: Eighteen new boats were purchased to replace unserviceable patrol vessels. Forty-five new patrol vehicles were purchased to replace unreliable law enforcement patrol vehicles.

Recruitment: Interest in vacant Conservation Enforcement Officer positions is high and the announcement of the CEO examination always results in several

2002-2003 Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Law Enforcement Statistics

Arrests
6,878

Warnings

hundred applicants taking the test. Efforts will be made to recruit highly motivated and capable applicants when the unit is allowed to commence hiring.

Future Plans

Hiring new officers to fill critical vacancies continues to be a priority. The Section is establishing a comprehensive arrest database. Updating our aging VHF radio system will be necessary to meet the future communication needs. A comprehensive training and reference manual is under development and should be completed during the next year. The Section also has plans to update its patrol boat fleet.

FISHERIES

The Fisheries Section's mission is to protect, conserve and increase the freshwater aquatic resources of Alabama.

Facilities and Personnel

There are 64 staff members in the Section including fisheries biologists, fisheries biologist aides, clerk stenographers, account clerks, administrative support assistants, a building maintenance supervisor, a carpenter, equipment operators and laborers. Fisheries Section facilities include six permanent district offices with laboratories. The Section has three fish hatcheries with fish hatching and holding buildings, personnel residences and storage buildings. Twenty-three state-owned public fishing lakes in 20 counties have a total surface area of 1,912 acres. Each of the 20 locations has a concession building, storage building, and in some cases, a residence.

Accomplishments

Technical Assistance: District fisheries biologists conducted 1,051 biological checks of farm ponds. Individuals requesting assistance were given appropriate solutions in writing to problems. The Fisheries Section reviewed, investigated and commented on 426 water-related permits and environmental impact statements. Written comments were provided to the appropriate agencies. District biologists investigated 21 reported fish kills and cases of pollution. Formal reports prepared by the investigators were sent to the appropriate agencies.

Public Fishing Lakes: A total of 187,371 anglers harvested 384,463 fish weighing 288,039 pounds from all 23 state-operated public fishing lakes. Each angler averaged 1.5 pounds of

fish per trip. These figures represent an increase of 5.3 percent and 14.3 percent respectively, from the number and weight of fish harvested in FY03 than in FY02. The number of anglers fishing on Alabama's State Lakes increased approximately 2.8 percent from FY 2002. Fisheries biologists and support personnel made 549 visits to State Lakes to evaluate the condition of fish populations and to conduct various operational and maintenance activities. The Carbon Hill, Eastaboga, and Marion fish hatcheries stocked a total of 2,301,526 fish into Alabama's State Lakes. Species stocked included bluegill, channel catfish, Florida strain largemouth bass, redear sunfish, black crappie, and white amur. An additional 3,300 pounds of rainbow trout were stocked into Madison County Lake.

New lake managers were hired at Crenshaw County Lake, and the lake was reopened to fishing. Lake manager contracts were renewed at Bibb, Coffee, Dale and Monroe County Lakes.

Fishing piers meeting the standards set by the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) were constructed at DeKalb and Marion County Lakes. Existing fishing piers at Crenshaw and Pike County Lakes were renovated to ADA specifications. An ADA compliant parking pad was constructed at Marion County Lake. An ADA compliant restroom and new fertilizer building were placed into service at Lee County Lake. ADA compliant restrooms were repaired at Barbour, Bibb, Madison and Walker County Lakes.

Heating/cooling, water, electrical and/or septic systems were repaired at Bibb, Chambers, Clay, Coffee, Escambia, Fayette, Lee and Walker County Lakes.

Washington County Lake was closed to the public and drained for renovation. A marginal treatment was conducted at Coffee County Lake.

Access Areas: During the year, 503 routine inspections



Barbour County Lake

of 125 access areas were made by Fisheries Section personnel. In excess of \$644,276 of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries funds were obligated to develop and maintain boating access areas in FY03.

Major accomplishments include the following: Binion Creek in Tuscaloosa County – resurfaced parking lot; Mink Creek in Jackson County – resurfaced parking lot; Langston Road in Jackson County – resurfaced parking lot; Claysville in Marshall County – resurfaced parking lot; Opposite Mile 370 in Marshall County – resurfaced parking lot; Arrowhead in Limestone County – resurfaced parking lot; Long Island in Jackson County – renovated boat ramp; Po Boy's Landing in Lee County – constructed ADA compliant parking area; Cullman County Park in Cullman County – new floating courtesy dock; Kelly Creek in St. Clair County – restriped parking lot; Gordan in Houston County – restriped parking lot; Binion Creek in Tuscaloosa County – restriped parking lot; Steel Creek Landing in Mobile County – renovated boat ramps; Lay Lake Boat Ramp in Shelby County – riprap erosion control; and McIntosh Landing in Washington County – entrance drive and parking lot repairs.

Aquatic Plant Management: Aquatic plant communities were monitored to determine their impact on small boat navigation and fish populations in Alabama's public waters. During FY03, 21 acres of mixed emergent aquatic vegetation consisting of *Scirpus cubensis*, alligator weed, water primrose, and giant cutgrass were treated in public waters. A one-acre plot of *Hydrilla* was treated at Oak Mountain State Park. In Dannelly Reservoir, eight acres of alligatorweed were treated to provide angler access in the lower reservoir. Approximately 40 acres of *hydrilla* were treated successfully in Daub's Swamp on Demopolis Reservoir, and a 36-acre arm of Turkey Creek in Coffeerville Reservoir. Also, 12 acres of emergent aquatic vegetation were treated on Demopolis, and 100 acres of emergent aquatic vegetation were treated on Coffeerville Reservoir during FY03.

Fish Hatcheries: The Carbon Hill, Eastaboga and Marion State Fish hatcheries distributed 71,931 largemouth bass and 677,300 bream to 185 new ponds (480.3 acres), 90 renovated old ponds (266.25 acres) and 5 ponds (26.75 acres) which needed corrective restocking of largemouth bass fingerlings. Fish were also stocked in public waters statewide, including public fishing lakes, as indicated in the table on this page.

Presentations: Fisheries Section biologists attended public meetings and workshops on fisheries resource topics around the state, and made 177 presentations on various fisheries topics including displays at boat shows and fairs.

Publications: The 2002 Bass Angling Information Team (BAIT) Annual Report was completed and sent to the 50 supporting bass clubs. Six articles dealing with aquatic resource management, fisheries section programs and fisheries management history were prepared

Fish Stocked in Public Waters Fiscal Year 2002-2003*

Species	Inch Group	Number
Black Bass		
Largemouth Bass - Florida	1-16	460,897
Largemouth Bass - Northern	10-12	619
Morone Species		
Striped Bass-Gulf Race	Fry – 2	553,098
Hybrid Striped Bass	1-2	691,031
Channel Catfish	3-28	308,631
Sunfish		
Bluegill	1-8	2,074,004
Redear	1	114,480
Black Crappie	3-6	9,268
White Amur (Grass Carp)	12-28	4,490
Rainbow Trout	8-10	21,003
TOTAL		4,303,592

*Includes state owned and managed public fishing

by Fisheries Section staff and released to media outlets. The newly revised handbook *Sportfish Management in Alabama Ponds* was also published in 2003. Manuscripts for two research studies completed by Fisheries Section staff in FY03 have been accepted for publication in the 57th Annual Proceedings of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Research: Two studies that were started in FY99 through the Statewide Fisheries Research Project were completed in FY03 and the final reports for both studies have been submitted. The first of these studies involved the District V's staff monitoring and recording tag returns from the 4,500 tagged channel catfish and 2,145 tagged hybrid striped bass that were stocked in Fish River and Soldier's Creek in FY99 and surveying angler response to these stockings. The second study involved staff from Districts I and III monitoring the movements of the 14 gulf coast striped bass in Lewis Smith Reservoir that were tagged with ultrasonic transmitters during FY99 and FY00. Through the Investigation and Management Techniques for Public Waters Project, there were seven contractual studies that were conducted during the year. These studies involved research on the recruitment of black bass in Alabama reservoirs, the recruitment of catfish and striped bass on the lower Tallapoosa River, largemouth bass population assessment on Wheeler Reservoir, genetic

analysis of channel catfish stocks in Alabama, the assessment of river sedimentation and backwater connectivity on fish populations in Demopolis Reservoir, population characteristics of largemouth bass in the Mobile Delta and the population status and habitat delineation of redeye bass in the middle Tallapoosa River.

Reservoir Management: Black bass, hybrid and striped bass, sauger, shad, crappie, bluegill, and redear populations were sampled by electrofishing, trap netting, trawling and/or gillnetting in Wheeler, Wilson, Lewis Smith, Weiss, Logan Martin, Harris, Demopolis, Warrior, Gainesville, West Point, Bartletts Ferry, and Eufaula reservoirs in addition to the upper and lower Mobile Delta. All fish collected were measured and weighed. Thermal and oxygen profiles were collected from most of the previously mentioned reservoirs. Reservoir reconnaissance surveys were completed on all reservoirs where standardized sampling was performed. Results of the surveys are incorporated in appropriate reservoir reports. Relative values of angler harvest, effort, and pressure were collected by creel surveys on Wheeler, Weiss, Gainesville and Bartletts Ferry reservoirs. Creel data will be summarized for all locations and included in the appropriate reservoir reports.

General Survey: General fish sampling and surveys were conducted on Wheeler, Wilson, Weiss, Logan Martin, Holt, Gainesville, Warrior, Mitchell, Millers Ferry, Coffeerville, Claibourne and Eufaula reservoirs, Lake Frank Jackson, the Yellow and Coosa rivers. Samples of bass, catfish or representatives of other predator or omnivore groups were collected from several locations for a cooperative contaminant study with the Alabama Department of Environmental Management. Fisheries Section personnel sampled sites on the lower Alabama River for the purpose of collecting Alabama sturgeon. No additional sturgeon specimens were captured during FY03.

Endangered Species (Section-6) Studies: Our staff malacologist conducted three endangered species Section 6 studies in FY03 (Tennessee River mussel recovery, Tombigbee River mussel survey, and Coosa River snail survey). Fisheries staff administered the following 9 additional Section 6 contractual studies in FY03: blue sucker population survey, upper Tombigbee River mussel survey, mussel propagation and reintroduction survey, paddlefish egg and larvae survey, paddlefish population survey, tulatoma snail survey, Coosa River mussel survey, Paint Rock River mussel survey, and pygmy sculpin/crayfish interaction study.

Aquatic Education (Community Fishing Program): The Fisheries Section, with assistance from other sections of the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, conducted 64 events, reaching over 11,026 participants plus their families and volunteers. Fishing classes were conducted for various audiences (mostly youth) during 55 sessions that reached 1,015 participants. Eighteen casting classes

were taught in schools for 559 participants. Rods and reels were loaned to physical education instructors who allowed students to practice casting. Talks about how aquatic resources functions were presented to 55 groups with a total audience of 1,538. Other talks were given on 29 occasions. Additional information was presented to the public through displays for 49 days at events such as boat shows, fairs and Earth Day celebrations.

Six fisheries articles were distributed through media outlets, mailing lists and our website. Five of these articles were published in the Department's *Outdoor Alabama* magazine. Link pages for places to fish in Alabama were developed and maintained for 35 water bodies and Alabama's State Public Fishing Lakes. Additional aquatic resource information was added to the Web site. Materials were prepared for county and district meetings to help educate the public about fishery issues.

Freshwater Mussel Management and Research: A total of 40 biological field trips were made during this fiscal year for general and specialized surveys of mussel and snail populations. Survey sites included locations on the Cahaba, Conecuh, Alabama, Locust Fork, Tennessee, Sipsey Fork, Tombigbee and Coosa rivers as well as numerous tributary streams. Assistance and consultation regarding mollusk issues were provided to Tennessee Valley Authority, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Geological Survey of Alabama, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Tennessee Aquarium Research Institute and The Nature Conservancy.

Non-Game Fisheries Activities: A non-game fisheries biologist was hired in FY03. Duties include, but are not limited to: develop and coordinate the State of Alabama Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) plan, coordinate and administer threatened and endangered species projects, coordinate and administer the Alabama sturgeon project, develop a stream and river monitoring and assessment program, and administer aquatic sampling permits.

Non-game fisheries and district personnel conducted 63 biological trips in an attempt to collect Alabama sturgeon; however, none were collected. A general reconnaissance-sampling trip was conducted below Logan Martin Dam to ascertain the fish community. Two biological field trips were conducted on Bluewater Creek and Big Nance Creek to assist Geological Survey of Alabama personnel with stream IBI sampling.

Significant Problems and Solutions

Public Fishing Lakes: Bass crowding continues to be a problem statewide. Removal of bass by the use of anglers, electrofishing gear, along with judicious use of marginal treatments and slot limits, will be employed to manage overcrowded bass populations.

Recruitment of qualified lake managers at rural lakes continues to be a problem. This problem seems to be alleviated where suitable housing can be provided.

There is a need to advertise and market these recreational fishing opportunities to the public.

Riverine Habitat: The loss of riverine habitat in Alabama has resulted in the decline or loss of obligate riverine fishes. Efforts continue to document habitat loss and provide suitable riverine habitat where possible. There is a need to develop a comprehensive plan for the permitting or managing of water withdrawals, water discharges and instream flow changes as it relates to the protection of aquatic habitat.

Aquatic Plants: The spread of established various species of exotic aquatic vegetation and the loss of native aquatic plants remains an issue for Alabama waters. The threat of the introduction of other noxious plants to public waters is constantly present. Funding is inadequate for the control of existing vegetation problems and responding to reports of new introductions.

Access Areas: The loss of the inmate work squad has been a major blow to the Boating Access Program. The resulting litter problem and the loss of assistance from inmates on both litter removal at ramps and construction of concrete push-in slabs has impacted productivity and increased the cost of operations. Currently, discussions are being held in hopes of hiring retired conservation officers to work part-time supervising the inmate work squad. Many local agencies which have entered into a maintenance agreement with the Department have failed to comply with their commitment. Delays in obtaining permits from governmental agencies for construction of new boat ramps continues to slow progress in constructing new sites.

Non-Game Fisheries: The number of Alabama sturgeon biological field trips decreased due to the high river flows. Non-game fisheries personnel will conduct Alabama sturgeon sampling efforts in the Cahaba River in FY04.

Fish Hatcheries: The goal of propagating Alabama sturgeon has not been achieved at this time due to the inability in acquiring sufficient numbers of broodfish. Many production ponds including drain kettles, water supply lines, drainage lines and power supply to the ponds are in need of renovation.

Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS): The greatest challenge facing resource agencies may very well be the control of the introduction of ANS into public waters. Various exotic fish, mussels, snails, crayfish, plants, microinvertebrates, viruses, bacteria and other non-native species are causing, and will result in, an escalating impact to economics, recreation, public health and the ecology. The first step is to develop a statewide comprehensive aquatic nuisance species plan which will require a commitment of staff and funds.

Future Plans

- Continue to install new logo signs at all Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries offices, state lakes and boating access sites statewide.

- Continue resurfacing parking lots at boating access areas and construct new ramps statewide where a need exists and local in-kind matching funds are available.
- Monitor reservoir fish populations and riverine habitat.
- Expand riverine fish population sampling.
- Continue to search for and collect Alabama sturgeon.
- Participate in the Alternative Relicensing Process for nine dams in the Coosa and Warrior drainages and two dams on the Conecuh River.
- Evaluate hatchery production capabilities to assess non-game fish, mussel and snail culture potential.
- Expand efforts to introduce children to fishing and in raising awareness of aquatic resources which includes the appointment of a second aquatic education biologist for central Alabama.
- A safety committee has been formed to explore the need to conduct additional training and institute workplace protocols to increase safety of our employees.

Wildlife Section

The mission of the Wildlife Section is to manage and enhance the wildlife resources of Alabama and to provide for maximum public benefit. The section maintains Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) to provide public access for hunting and recreation; monitors wildlife populations to determine management needs; provides the Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Director recommendations on hunting season lengths, dates, bag limits and restrictions; provides technical assistance to landowners, managers and hunting clubs on wildlife and habitat management and harvest strategies to improve wildlife resources, and on animal damage control to protect crops and property as much as practical without undue damage to wildlife resources. The section provides technical assistance to other government agencies to help structure activities to avoid undue damage to wildlife and enhance those resources where possible. The section also provides information to the public on the natural history, problems and management needs of Alabama wildlife.

The section provides a Hunter Education Program to train the public, especially beginning hunters, on safety, ethics and individual responsibilities of wildlife conservation.

Wildlife Section operations involve ongoing projects such as developing and maintaining wildlife openings, roads, buildings and boundary lines on 34 WMAs, two wildlife refuges and two sanctuaries (approximately 808,760 acres of land); administering public hunts on approximately 801,760 acres of WMA land; stocking wild turkeys; participating on boards and committees to provide input into plans and decisions affecting wildlife; conducting wildlife research and surveys and publishing

the results; cooperating with universities to conduct wildlife research of mutual interest; administering a Nongame Wildlife Program; planning and coordinating environmental activities and review of impact statements; and administering the Alabama Cooperative Deer Management Assistance Program.

Facilities and Personnel

An administrative staff with offices in Montgomery coordinated and monitored operations within the Wildlife Section. The staff consisted of a Wildlife Chief, two Assistant Chiefs, one Forester, one Hunter Education Program Coordinator, one Nongame Wildlife Coordinator, one TREASURE Forest Coordinator, Wildlife Biologist and four clerical personnel.

Six districts across the state are staffed by a supervising wildlife biologist and include a number of area wildlife biologists and managers, biologist aides, equipment operators, clerical personnel and laborers. One nongame wildlife biologist was headquartered at Florence primarily for north Alabama assignments and one at Spanish Fort for south Alabama. One Hunter Education Coordinator was assigned at Cullman to handle north Alabama activities and one at Andalusia for south Alabama activities.

Accomplishments

Wildlife Section personnel participated in meetings of the Mississippi Flyway Council, Alabama's primary means of input into waterfowl management decisions that affect this state. Fourteen states, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Canadian Wildlife Service, three Canadian Provinces and several private organizations participate each year. One assistant chief serves as the consultant to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service representing the southern region of the Mississippi Flyway Council.

Research and biological surveys were conducted to obtain information on wildlife and their habitats. Aerial waterfowl censuses and hunter bag checks were conducted in the Mobile Delta and on the Tennessee River during fall and winter. Aerial censuses were also conducted for bald eagles.

Information was collected on WMAs and other sites to determine deer hunter participation and success, the physical condition of deer and the current status of deer populations. Deer were collected at 11 sites to assess reproductive characteristics within those populations. A hunting activity survey was conducted and published. The results were valuable in determining hunting season lengths and bag limits and evaluating the success of each hunting season. Data for the 2002-2003 Alabama Hunting Survey were analyzed by personnel within the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences at Auburn University. Plans were made to have the data for future surveys analyzed by Auburn University in a similar manner. An annual 28-survey-route mourning dove study was conducted

Wildlife Section Facilities

Montgomery Central office and warehouse facilities

District I District office (Tanner) and 7 WMAs

District II District office (Jacksonville), 7 WMAs
and 2 wildlife refuges

District III District office (Northport), office (Demopolis), 6 WMAs

District IV District office (Montgomery), 4 WMAs

District V District office (Spanish Fort), office (Jackson), 7 WMAs and 2 wildlife sanctuaries

with information shared with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to form season and bag limit regulations. As part of a nationwide project, 1,189 mourning doves were trapped, banded and released. Data from reported band returns will be analyzed to provide parameters needed for dove population modeling such as band return rates and estimates for mortality and survival. Observation surveys provided data on furbearer populations.

A new management book titled *Biology and Management of White-tailed Deer in Alabama* was published and made available for distribution. Staff biologists Chris Cook and Bill Gray wrote the book, which can also be viewed and downloaded from the Department's Web site.

The Wildlife Section and Auburn University continued a study to assess the effects of growing season prescribed fire on productivity and survival of northern bobwhites. We are also cooperating with the U.S. Forest Service and Quail Unlimited on a study on the Shoal Creek District of the U.S. Forest Service.

Over 1,400 man-days were devoted to providing technical assistance to landowners, individuals, clubs and government agencies. Biologists made on-site inspections, reviewed plans and provided recommendations for effective wildlife management. The Cooperative Deer Management Assistance Program included 462 landowners and hunting clubs covering more than 977,000 acres. Cooperation between hunters, biologists and enforcement personnel permitted more flexibility in harvesting deer.

Approximately 211,400 man-days of hunting occurred on WMAs. Harvest figures reached expected levels. These areas also furnish trapping, fishing, hiking, picnicking, camping and nature study opportunities. Approximately 2,940 miles of boundary lines were marked, 11,614 acres of wildlife openings were main-

tained, and 1,890 miles of area roads were maintained.

The Hunting Trail for People with Physical Disabilities included 13 areas. These areas have been well received.

Seven shooting ranges on Wildlife Management Areas and the Etowah Public Shooting Range continue to receive excellent public use. These ranges are open to the public on a daily basis during daylight hours. Maintenance is conducted throughout the year by staff members and volunteers. Construction of a 200 yard range began at the Etowah Public Shooting Range in September 2003 and should be completed during fiscal year 2004.

Section personnel manned booths at functions such as state and county fairs, gun and boat shows, and forest festivals, making personal contacts and distributing educational material.

Opportunities for youth participation in hunting are not as numerous as we would desire. The youth dove hunting program continued on 40 sites across the state. This is a cooperative effort with private landowners and other sponsors. The goal is to provide youth the opportunity to experience hunting in a positive atmosphere. The hunts were extremely popular with a significant percentage of the youth being first time hunters. In addition, youth hunt opportunities were offered on the wildlife management areas for deer, turkey and waterfowl.

Articles written by section staff were distributed once a week to statewide media as "Wildlife and the Outdoors" columns. These popular features were published in many newspapers, magazines and newsletters throughout Alabama and other states, and were effective in disseminating public information and increasing citizen awareness of services available from the Wildlife Section.

Nongame Wildlife Program biologists continued to monitor bald eagle overwintering and nesting populations in Alabama. A total of 149 bald eagles—118 adult and 31 immature—were recorded during the winter survey. Forty-seven confirmed nesting attempts were reported in 2003. The number of confirmed nesting attempts increased by four compared to the previous year (43) and 12 in 2001 (35). There have now been a total of 301 nesting attempts in the state since eagles resumed nesting in 1987. Each year the surveys continue to record an increase in the nesting bald eagle population within the state.

Wildlife biologists with the Nongame Wildlife Program gave approximately 20 presentations to groups on eagles, shorebirds, backyard wildlife habitat management, and other nongame wildlife species. Nongame biologists also participate in annual surveys to monitor the status of breeding birds in Alabama. The surveys include colonial nesting shorebirds in coastal Alabama, most notably on Gaillard Island where between 4,000 and 5,000 pairs of pelicans nest annually. Additionally, five routes of the Breeding Bird Survey are conducted annually by Nongame staff contributing to the continent-wide monitor-



ing of neotropical and other resident nesting species.

Other bird surveys include participation in the International Migration Day count held in May. Double crested cormorants were first-time nesters in Alabama during FY 02-03. Surveys attempted to locate nesting sites and nesting numbers at locations in north Alabama. The Alabama Breeding Bird Atlas continues, and nongame biologists contribute to that database. Nongame biologists participate in two National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Counts, coordinating and compiling one of the count circles. Finally, Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences coordinated a survey for wintering American oystercatchers along the entire Gulf and Atlantic coasts. Nongame biologist assisted with the Alabama portion of that count in February.

Nongame staff is also charged with administering the permitting of falconry for the state. Seven new falconers were tested and approved bringing the total number of permitted falconers in the state to 34.

The Nongame Wildlife Program received \$256,258 of federal aid funds for projects on wildlife species eligible for funding under Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act. Population and status surveys were conducted for the gray bat, indigo snake, map turtles, red hills salamander, blue sucker, and paddlefish. Systematic surveys were conducted on the Upper Tombigbee River, Coosa River, Black Warrior River, Paint Rock River and Tennessee River primary tributaries to document the presence of listed and candidate species of fish, snails, mussels and crayfish. Also a project to restore the entrance to Shelta Cave for gray bat management was accomplished.

This was the 11th year that completing the Alabama Hunter Education Program was mandatory for first time hunting license buyers born on or after August 1, 1977. Hunter education instructors taught 398 classes totaling 4,776 hours of instruction and certified 12,608 students. The courses were taught by 702 certified instructors (500 volunteers and 202 employees). Approximately 2,000 Alabamians participated in 60 youth shooting sports events that were conducted throughout the state to promote safe, responsible firearms handling and improve marksmanship skills. These one-day events are designed to introduce participants to muzzleloaders, shotguns, .22 rifles and pellet guns.

Problems and Solutions

Loss of Leased Land: The continual loss of leased land and the threat of loss for WMAs is a significant problem. During the year a significant portion of the Kinterbish WMA and smaller portions of other WMA's were withdrawn. Land lost is usually closed to the public and leased to a relatively small number of individuals. More leased land is likely to be lost in the future. The Wildlife Section will attempt to lease or purchase other lands and provide additional incentives to encourage landowners to include lands in the program. We will also continue to work with Forever Wild in an effort to purchase land for public hunting



License Holder Database: One problem of the division shared by this section is the lack of an electronic database of license holders. Because this information is lacking, it is extremely difficult to understand our customers or to establish trend data of the hunters and anglers. The lack of a database also hampers survey work. To complete our annual hunter harvest survey we continue to manually search the licenses sold. It is a slow process that does not accommodate new surveys being implemented.

Nongame Funding: Funding for the Nongame Wildlife Program is not adequate. Revenue from the income tax check-off has leveled off. Funds from federal initiatives are becoming available but they require a state-matching share of 25 to 50 percent. Additional sources of revenue are required to meet this need.

Wildlife Diseases: Wildlife diseases are not new but one in particular continues to demand attention. Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), once thought to be a problem in only the western part of the country, has been found in other areas. Its spread is linked mostly to the transportation of deer and elk. Due to the severe impact CWD can have on a deer population, we have taken several steps. We continued the random surveillance program. All deer tested were negative. We also continue participation with other agencies in a CWD Working Group. That work will continue into the next year. We will also significantly increase our surveillance program in the next year.

Diversity in the Workforce: We have not been as successful as we had hoped in creating diversity in the section's workforce. We have participated in the SEAFWA diversity committee and have communicated our needs to university wildlife departments. This problem is not unique to Alabama and is one we will continue to work to improve.

Hunter Education: The mandatory hunter education program brought Alabama in line with the majority of states. The program is beneficial in providing information to the state's hunters. We continue to explore better delivery mechanisms to minimize scheduling conflicts. A home study option has been developed for hardship cases. A Hunter Education CD ROM program developed in cooperation with seven other Southeastern states has been readily accepted by instructors and students. A Hunter Education Internet course was brought online in the spring of 2003. This course, along with the CD ROM, has greatly improved access to the mandatory hunter education program. Volunteers continue to be an integral part of the program by teaching classes and delivering the information to students.

Hunter Participation: Hunter participation continues to remain approximately the same over the past few years. However, over the long term, statistical numbers reveal a decrease in comparison to the percentage of the population. There are many contributing factors to this, and it is not a problem unique to Alabama. Convenient locations to

hunt and shoot are part of the problem and steps to correct those problems have been mentioned. It is thought that low participation is greatest in the younger age groups. An emphasis on youth programs will continue.

Future Plans

The Wildlife Section will continue operating WMAs for outdoor recreation. Every effort will be made to add acreage to WMAs, including contacts with corporate and private landowners and working with the Forever Wild program to identify appropriate tracts of land to purchase. During the year we finalized the purchase on approximately 626 acres in Colbert County that is now a part of the Freedom Hills WMA.

We will continue to improve our relationship with the non-hunting public. Legislation in the U.S. Congress has provided limited funding for nongame wildlife work. It appears it will be some time before the comprehensive program most states prefer is passed. Any federal money that becomes available will require a state match.

Sport shooting is closely related to hunting activities, and it is important for the public to have safe areas to participate in that sport. We will continue our efforts to increase developed shooting range sites. We are anxious to form more partnerships similar to the one in Etowah County.

We plan to continue the youth dove hunting program by offering approximately 30 youth dove hunting sites across the state next year. This program has not only been popular with young hunters, it has opened many new areas for public hunting and has helped to create new partnerships.

Work continued and accelerated on the Nongame Wildlife Program's efforts to create a birding trail in north Alabama. Modeled after the highly successful Alabama Coastal Birding Trail – the North Alabama Birding Trail (NABT) will consist of 50 premier birding sites across

north Alabama. These sites will be advertised by brochures, maps, site and directional signage, and an Internet webpage. The NABT is expected to provide a quality recreation experience for the avitourist, to educate the public on conservation issues, and to provide an economic boost to the economies in north Alabama.

The trail is being financed by a \$280,000 federal matching grant – 25 percent from private sources and 75 percent from federal funds. Matching funds were provided by area Convention and Business Bureaus and/or Chambers of Commerce, the Tennessee Valley Authority, 3-M Company, BP-Amoco Company, the North Alabama Tourist Association, and the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge Association.

At the request of the Nongame Program, a "site selection committee" consisting of biologists from various natural resource agencies, and individuals from private birding organizations, met and selected 50 excellent birding sites. It was determined that a consulting firm specializing in nature/birding trail construction would be employed for much of the work on the trail. Invitations to bid were advertised, and the firm Fermata, Inc. was selected and contracted to complete the trail. During the report period, Nongame Program staff visited each of the sites to assess based on the site criteria developed by the Nongame Program staff. A series of six public information meetings about the NABT were planned and scheduled for November 2003.

Providing landowners and land managers technical assistance to better help them implement strategies to improve wildlife habitat on their lands continues to grow in importance. During the year discussions were held with the Natural Resource Conservation Service to learn how provisions of the 2002 Farm Bill could be utilized to benefit wildlife managers. We are discussing some innovative partnerships to help make that happen.

Budget and Expenditures for Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division

<u>Section Name</u>	<u>Budgeted Amount*</u>	<u>Expenditures</u>
Administrative	\$3,010,830.00	\$2,900,690.00
Enforcement	11,011,430.00	9,559,111.00
Fisheries	5,768,452.00	4,818,099.00
Wildlife	8,189,431.00	6,677,689.00

**Funding includes Federal Aid in Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration monies apportioned to Alabama based on the state's geographical size and hunting and fishing license sales.*



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